

What Things to Flee, What Things to Follow

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"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." 1 Timothy 6:11

I have often been struck with the vein of sincerity that runs through Paul's writings; and have sometimes thought, if infidelity were not case-hardened, it would fall beneath the power of the sincerity so manifestly displayed, and would come to this conclusion, that whether what we read in the Scripture is the revelation of God or not, this one thing is certain, that Paul believed it to be so. It seems to me nearly impossible to read his Epistles without seeing that he writes them out of the fulness of a believing heart, and that he himself was perfectly convinced of the truth of those things which he declared. And I do not know any of Paul's Epistles which show more of this striking vein of sincerity than the two Epistles to Timothy. What an affectionate, I might say, parental solicitude does the Apostle display in them! What tenderness, gentleness, and wisdom shine through them; and how his whole heart and soul seemed to desire the spiritual prosperity of his dear son to whom he addressed them.

In the text, we find him exhorting his beloved son Timothy to *flee* from some things, and to *follow* after others. "But thou, O man of God," appealing to him as a servant of the Lord of Hosts, "*flee* these things; and *follow* after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." If then, with God's blessing, I am enabled this evening to show, *first*, the things that we are to flee; and *then*, what we are to follow, I

shall, I trust, spiritually unfold the mind of the Holy Ghost in the text.

I.—But in order to see what things the Apostle exhorted his dear son Timothy to flee, we must go back a little to the early part of the chapter.

We find, then, the Apostle, in the beginning of the chapter, (1 Tim. 6:1) giving a precept to believing servants; "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." The Apostle was afraid of the abuse that human nature might make of the doctrine of grace. The Lord in mercy, perhaps, had visited the soul of some servant, or slave, as the word literally means, as in the case of the runaway Onesimus. (Philemon 15, 16.) Now the slave might argue, "If the Lord has made me free; if I am an heir of glory; if God is my Father, the Son my Saviour, the Spirit my Teacher, and heaven my eternal home, am I still to be a servant, and do servile drudgery?" "Yes," says the Apostle; "God's mercies in grace do not alter your relation in providence. The Spirit's work in your heart does not take you out of your temporal station in life; and so far from releasing you from all obligation to obedience to your master, it rather enhances it by giving new motives how to perform it in the spirit of the gospel." "Let," he says, "as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters *worthy of all honor*, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." Let them pay their unbelieving masters additional honour, instead of less, that the master, seeing what advantage the servant takes of the doctrine he professes, may not blaspheme or revile the name of God which the servant takes into his lips.

He then goes on to consider another case, where the

believing servant had a believing master. "And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren." The servant might say, "My master and I are both believers, and stand upon an equality in Christ; we are precisely upon one footing. And why should there be any difference or distinction of station on earth? Why should he command, and I obey?" But the apostle says, "Let them not (the believing servants) despise the believing masters because they are brethren, but rather do them service (that is, obey as servants) because they are faithful (that is believers) and beloved of God, partakers of the benefit," that is, of grace. So far, then, from the servant being absolved from all respect and obedience to his master because he is a believer, he is bound, for that very reason, to pay him additional respect, and serve him more faithfully. These things he enjoins on Timothy to "teach and exhort."

And this leads him to speak of those loose and licentious characters in the professing church who preached different doctrines. "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." There were in the professing church, in those, as in our days, practical Antinomians, who considered that by the gospel all the bonds of obligation were dissolved; and that grace, instead of making a man more obedient to the will and word of God and to human laws, released him from all earthly ties, and gave him liberty to act as he pleased. Now, the apostle exposes such characters, and warns his beloved Timothy against them; "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words," that is, sound, healthy doctrines, as opposed to all flights of wild enthusiasm; if he consent not to such wholesome, sound doctrine as this, "he is proud," puffed up with presumption

and vain conceit; "knowing nothing," with all his professed knowledge, as being ignorant of divine teaching; "but doting" (that is, raving in his excited mind, or idly dreaming, like a superannuated creature, or one who has lost his intellect by old age or idiocy), "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;" a covetous heart being the root of all; and then, he emphatically adds, "from such withdraw thyself."

The things, then, that the apostle calls upon his beloved son Timothy to flee, are those evils which he mentions. And he calls upon him in the name of the Lord to flee from, that is, shun, avoid, and depart from these things. But what is it that makes us depart from these things? What they are, I shall presently show. But that which makes us to depart from them, and withdraw from the men who teach them, is this—having had the heart touched by God's Spirit. This produces *light* in the understanding, giving us to see light in God's light; and thus we see the evil of these things in the light of God's countenance. And this divine work raises up also *life* in the soul, so that the evil of them is *felt* in the life of God's Spirit; and the conscience being thus made tender before the Lord, we flee from what we thus see, and what we thus feel to be hateful to God.

But let us come a little to particulars, and see what those things are that we are exhorted to flee from; for the exhortation is addressed not merely to "the man of God," but it belongs to the whole church of God; it must not be confined to ministers, but is equally incumbent upon private individuals; for "Let *every one* that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

1. We are then called upon to flee from "*questions and strifes of words.*" But are not questions and strifes of words the chief things preached nowadays? If a man can bring before the people some knotty question, some intricate text, some out-of-the-way figure, or mysterious passage, and solve it to his own admiration; or, if he can get up some strife of words, and show how all else are in error, and how he alone is right—how it feeds his pride at the wonderful display of wisdom which he thus makes before his congregation! If you were to analyse by this test of Paul's many so-called gospel sermons, and see their drift—how often, instead of God's glory and the edification of God's people, would they be found to turn upon mere questions and strifes of words!

2. But certain fearful evils are closely connected with these questions and strifes of words, as "envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings." "Envy," because some may be better received by God's family than themselves; "strife," being engaged in perpetual contentions, and raving against all that differ from them; "evil surmisings" and suspicions of the motives of those who oppose or withdraw from them; and "perverse disputings," perpetually wrangling from mere perverseness on every disputed point. The real authors of all these evils being men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, and supposing that gain is godliness, covetousness being the root of all their movements.

Now these things and these men the Lord the Spirit, by the pen of Paul, calls upon us to flee; he says, "From such withdraw thyself." And sure am I, if God the Spirit be our Teacher, and make our consciences tender in his fear, that we shall flee them; and we shall withdraw from these men of envy, strife, and discord, and especially from preachers whose ministry teems with these evils. My Zoar friends, if ever a minister came among you, full of questions and strifes

of words; if any one should get into this pulpit whose object seems to be to exalt himself, to sow strife, discord, and confusion, and rend the church and congregation, never let him stand up in this place again. From all strifes of words, from all perverse disputings, and from the men who scatter these firebrands, the Holy Ghost bids us flee. And I am sure that every sent servant of the Lord, who knows what divine teaching is in his own soul, and near to whose heart lies the glory of God and the profit of the church of Christ, will flee these perverse disputings, and will withdraw from men who sedulously propagate them to get themselves a living.

II.—But we pass on to consider what the things are which the Lord the Spirit in the text, calls upon us to *follow*. This divine Teacher, in mercy not only sets before us the things we are to shun, but the things also we are to pursue.

But, as I endeavoured to show what led us to flee the evil, let us consider what it is that induces us to follow after the good the apostle here speaks of. Two things chiefly conspire to do this: *first*, a feeling of our need of them, a deep and painful conviction in our souls how very far short we fall of attaining and enjoying them. And *secondly*, the raising up, by a divine power in our heart and conscience, intense desires and spiritual breathings after the enjoyment of these blessings, so as to know the sweetness, unction, and power of them. It is like one running a race: the sight of the goal to which he is tending urges forward his steps; the view of the prize stimulates his exertions. So spiritually, unless our eyes are opened to see the beauty, and our hearts in some measure touched to feel the power of the things we are to follow, we shall be but sluggards in the race; our hands will hang down, our knees will be feeble, our spirits languish, and our desires after them will be half-hearted, and but faintly breathed out.

Let us, then, take one by one the things which the apostle calls upon Timothy, his dear son, to follow.

1. The first is "*righteousness.*" "Follow after righteousness." We may understand two things by this expression. First, the discovery to the conscience of Christ's imputed righteousness in the way of justification; and secondly, the communication to the soul of a divine or righteous nature, whereby it brings forth the fruits of sincerity and uprightness before God. Both are to be followed after. But it may be asked, why the first, if a man has a knowledge of his justification, and a sense of his acceptance with God? But may not a sense of interest in Jesus' glorious righteousness, and the inward testimony of the Spirit be lost in the enjoyment of them, or at least considerably diminished, for a time? We read (Luke 15:8) of the woman who lost a piece of silver. Was there not a lighting of the candle, a sweeping of the house, and a diligent search into every corner till it was found again? The woman's piece of money was not really lost; it was still in the house; but as to her feelings, it was as much lost as though she were never to receive it again into her possession. So a sense of acceptance and justification by Christ's righteousness, this precious coin from heaven's mint may be lost for a time in feeling, though not really lost out of the heart. And what will the soul do that has lost it but diligently search the house in every corner, by the candle of the Spirit, till it find the piece of money again?

The Lord sees fit that many of his dear children should be often tried in their minds, and cast down in their souls about their acceptance with him; he permits clouds to rise and darken their evidences; he suffers Satan to shoot in his fiery darts; he allows their carnal mind to breed numerous doubts and fears; he withdraws the light of his countenance, and suspends the inward witness of the Spirit. These things cause

the soul to walk in darkness and gloom, and halt and stumble by reason of the difficulties of the way; so that its feelings are those of Job, when he complained: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." (Job 23:8, 9.)

The Apostle calls upon us, then, to "follow after righteousness;" that is, to press forward and eagerly desire in our consciences a sense of acceptance with God, a knowledge of pardon and of justification, that we may taste and realize "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Now, if a man watches the various movements of his heart, if he is much tried with temptations, much beset with perplexities, and much harassed by Satan, to follow after righteousness will cut him out abundant work; and he will not have time, and will feel less inclination, for "questions and strifes of words, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds." He will not be for solving knotty points of divinity; but he will be for having this knotty point solved in his conscience, "Where do *I* stand? Am I bound for heaven or hell? Is what I have professed to believe a work of grace the genuine work of the Holy Spirit on my heart? Is my experience the fruit of the inward teachings of God? Do my feelings come from the Spirit's inward operation? Am I right before God? Am I washed in the blood of the Lamb? Do I stand accepted in the beloved? Does the Holy Ghost bear his sweet witness in my conscience?" Where a man is exercised and tried upon these points, he will follow after righteousness; because he cannot be satisfied until he enjoys the manifestations of it to his conscience, and is brought to feel the love of God in his soul.

But as I before observed, the word "righteousness" has

another signification in the New Testament. There is righteousness *imparted*, as well as righteousness *imputed*; and, in this sense, righteousness is a fruit of the Spirit, and resides in "the new man," which, as we read, "after God (that is, after the image of God) is created in *righteousness* and true holiness." It is, in this sense, an inward principle of uprightness, honesty, integrity, simplicity, and godly sincerity; in a word, what we understand in the Scripture by the word holiness. Now holiness is a thing in our day much sneered at; and it seems as though some would almost trample the very word under their feet, and consider it only another name for legality. But the Holy Ghost declares most plainly that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14.) The Lord himself prayed to his Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17:17.) And the Apostle exhorts us to put off "the old man with his deeds," and "yield our members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

The righteousness, then, spoken of in the text, not only means acceptance and justification before God, but also that inward work of the Holy Ghost which produces a righteous and holy principle within us, with all the graces of sincerity, uprightness, and godly fear, brought with power into the heart. This is the righteousness the Apostle speaks of as "fulfilled in us." "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," (Rom. 8:4); and is the express fruit of the Spirit; "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." (Eph. 5:9.)

But how are we made spiritually to "follow after righteousness" in this sense? By knowing our own defilement, feeling our own filthiness, seeing the pollutions that cleave to every thought, word, and action, and thus

becoming thoroughly sick of sin, and sick of self. As we feel and abhor these evils, we shall, under the teachings of the Spirit, desire to bring forth fruit to God's glory, and to do those things that are well-pleasing and acceptable in his sight. If there are no inward breathings after sincerity before God, uprightness before men, and integrity in our various callings; if there is no hatred to evil, and love to that which is good; no inward desire to please God, no fear to offend him; no spiritual sorrow because we hourly do things that are displeasing to him; if there is no inward groaning of soul because we are so base and vile; and no earnest wish for the Lord to work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight,—I want to know what grace has done for us? But, just in proportion as we feel our lack of inward fruit, as we see afar off, at a vast distance, the beauty and blessedness of the Spirit's graces, and desire them to be brought into the conscience with divine power, there will be a following after them with the whole soul. As David says, "My soul followeth hard after thee." (Ps. 63:8.) Thus, sometimes on the knees there will be a pleading with the Lord to work it in us; sometimes there will be self-abhorrence because we know so little of it; and sometimes a desire that the Lord would turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken our soul in his way. There will be often, too, an earnest wish to avoid those sins in which we have been already entangled, and a desire to be kept from those snares which before have proved so dangerous. O that those who preach the doctrines of grace would more "follow after righteousness!" How often do those who stand up in the name of the Lord to preach a full and free salvation (to their shame be it spoken), make the truth stink in the nostrils of those who fear not God! What lightness, what frivolity, what presumption and vain confidence are visible in some! What drunkenness and even worse, such as adultery and lasciviousness, do we find sometimes come abroad in the world as transacted in secret

by others who have stood up to preach the gospel of the grace of God! How these things, when they come to light, as sooner or later they do, grieve the hearts of the Lord's people who are zealous for the truth, and what occasion do they give for the enemies of God to blaspheme!

2. "*Godliness.*" That is the second thing which the Apostle desires his son Timothy to follow after. *Godliness!* What is meant by the expression? It occurs very often in Paul's Epistles, and especially in those to Timothy. Thus, we read, "Exercise thyself unto *godliness.*" (1 Tim. 4:7.) "*Godliness* with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. 6:6.) "Great is the mystery of *godliness.*" (1 Tim. 3:16.) "All that will live *godly* in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12.)

By the word "*godliness,*" I think, is intended, the life of God in the soul; the inward teaching of the Spirit. For we find it opposed to "bodily exercise," which, says the Apostle, "profiteth little," whilst "*godliness* is profitable unto all things." (1 Tim. 4:8.) Now nothing is more opposed to all forms, and such exercises of the body as bowings and prostrations, than the inward work and teachings of the Spirit. And this *godliness,* or the life of God in the soul, in which all the power of religion consists, the Apostle exhorted his dear son Timothy to follow after. But how are we to follow after it? Two motives must conspire to urge us forward to this pursuit. *First,* a deep, painful, and increasing conviction how far short we fall of it. *Secondly,* to see its beauty, and to have an earnest desire to have it brought with divine power into our consciences. In order, then, "to follow after *godliness,*" we must learn what we are by nature; we must feel our ignorance, know our baseness, and experience what fallen wretches we are. We must be well acquainted with our helplessness and thorough impotency to work anything spiritual or gracious in our own consciences; and thus,

feeling poor and needy, come before the throne of mercy and grace beseeching the Lord to do for us what we cannot do in and for ourselves.

We must see, too, what a beautiful thing godliness is. We must feel what a precious gift it is to have the life of God in the soul; to have something more than a name to live; to have something deeper than mere consistency of conduct; to have something more abiding than a few doctrines floating in the head. We must feel what a mercy and blessing it is to have the Spirit of God for our Teacher, communicating light, life, power, and savour to our souls; working in us faith, hope, and love, and communicating out of Christ's fulness all his heavenly graces. But in order really to know and prize them, we must experience also what sweet feelings, blessed emotions, and divine sensations—what an inward power and satisfaction are known and realised in the soul under the operations of God the Spirit. To be acquainted with these inward feelings will make us follow after "godliness;" not the "form," which a man may have while he "denies the power;" not merely a set of correct notions; not the articles of a sound creed; not admittance into a gospel church; not attending to gospel ordinances; not hypocritical gestures, or turned-up eyes;—all which things may subsist where the life of God is absent. But we shall follow after the inward teachings of the Spirit, the presence of God in the soul, and the manifestations of his goodness and love. This is *godliness*; and to have this heavenly teaching and these divine operations in the conscience makes a man a godly man. It is not taking up a profession of religion, embracing a sound Calvinistic creed, coming out of the professing world, being baptized, and joining a gospel church, that makes a man a godly man, though a godly man will do some or all of these things; but a man may be and do all this, and only add hypocrisy to the rest of his sins. But to be a godly man is to

have the Holy Ghost for our Teacher, to live under the bedewings and droppings of his grace upon our spirit, and to feel his divine operations in our heart and conscience. Now as we feel how short we come of the power of this vital godliness; as we deeply and daily experience how barren we are without his fertilizing dew; how cold without his reviving warmth; how dark without his heavenly light; how worldly and carnal without our affections are fixed heavenward by his inward drawings; and as we see sometimes the beautiful land of godliness very far off—these things stir us up to follow after it. We are thus led inwardly to say, "What will it profit me, if this or that man thinks well of my religion; what good will it do my soul to have a name to live while dead? O what will it profit me in that terrible day, when the King shall sit upon his great white throne, to have deluded my own soul, deceived God's people, and died with a lie in my right hand? But to have had 'godliness,' to have experienced the Spirit of God working in me and dwelling in my body as his temple, to have known the presence of Jesus, to have felt the inward teachings of the Holy Ghost, and his divine testimony in my conscience—*that* will enable me to stand in that great day when the heavens are rolled together like a scroll; *that* will give me boldness before the Son of Man at his coming." So, as a man feels these things laid with weight and power on his conscience, he will say also, "What avail to me 'questions and strifes of words,' and 'perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds?' What avails to me their doting about things that will not profit my soul? How do I stand? Where am I? What does God think of me? And have I any testimony in my conscience that I am right for eternity?" As these things are felt, there will be a following after godliness.

3. The next thing the Holy Ghost calls upon Timothy, by the pen of Paul, to follow after, is "*faith*." Now what I said before is equally applicable to this, that we can follow after nothing

until we know how short we come of it, and how desirable it is to possess it. Look at the man running a race! Is it not because he sees he is yet short of the goal, that he presses on to reach it? And does not the feeling how desirable the prize is when the goal is reached, also stimulate his exertions to obtain it? So spiritually, if I think I have "all faith," if I need no more than I have, if I want no more communications from on high, I shall not be following very eagerly after it. But if, on the contrary, I feel, as I do painfully, what an unbelieving heart I carry in my bosom, what infidel suspicions dart across my mind, how unable I am, in my own power, to receive God's truth in the love of it, and how helpless to call the little faith I may have into exercise,—as I am conscious of these things, and yet know by heartfelt experience what an active grace faith is, these two things working together in the soul will urge me to follow after it. Nothing is easier than a profession of faith; it costs but a few words. It only requires a seared conscience, a hard heart, a presumptuous mind, and a hypocritical tongue to lay claim to all the faith possible. But when, by God the Spirit's teaching, we have been driven out of refuges of lies; have been shown how undone we are by nature; when we groan and sigh under a body of sin and death, and feel how deficient and ineffective our faith is at those seasons when we most need it—this will make us "follow after faith." Not that we can obtain it by our own exertions, but we follow after it as a divine gift, as something communicated and brought into our conscience by God the Spirit.

Now, if we know anything of unbelief on the one hand; or anything of faith on the other, we shall find that we want faith to be brought into our souls, continually. Here is the world spreading its nets, and entangling our feet in its snare; sometimes distracting the mind with its business, at others alluring the heart with its pleasures; and continually

attempting to draw us aside into paths that, if walked in, would make a living conscience bleed. Do not you, men of business, feel the world to be a fearful snare to you, in these days of almost general cheating and swindling, when business transactions can hardly be carried on by a man of tender conscience? I am sure you must find it hard work to act in the fear of God. But the more you find the world setting snares for your feet, the more will you need that faith which overcomes it. If a man have nothing but false faith, when he goes abroad he can leave his religion at home. He can go on the Exchange, or into the market, and talk and act as if he made no profession at all. Religion, he thinks, is not wanted there; he can transact his business best without it; for then he can do as other people do. But a Christian man cannot thus act. He knows that to go into the world, and leave his faith at home, would be like a soldier going to war without taking his musket, or rushing upon the enemy, without any weapon of attack or defence. He that knows anything of living faith, cannot leave it thus at home, for it will not leave him. He cannot leave at home the inward rebukes and checks of conscience, if he act wrong; he cannot leave at his fireside the tongue of truth, nor a heart made honest by God's grace, for they will ever accompany him. And thus he will find on the Exchange, in the market, and behind the counter, his need of living faith in exercise; for he feels that he can only overcome the world by the possession of this precious grace.

I will tell you how it is with most persons. Sin does not very much affect or trouble them; and the reason is, because there is no inward dam set up against it. I very well remember Old London Bridge. Often, as a boy, have I passed over it, and stopped to look at the tide rushing impetuously through the narrow arches. But I pass over London Bridge now, and I see no such rushing of water, and no such danger

to the slight wherries. What has made the difference? There is now a greater passage for the water; it is no longer hemmed in by the narrow ancient arches; the old lumbering water-works exist no more. It was the opposition that the old bridge made to the stream that caused such a rush of the water through the middle arch, and sometimes raised so fearful a cascade. Now the arches are all wide and open, and the tide flows through freely. So it is in grace; where there is only a name to live, it is New London Bridge; the arches are wide enough to let the waters flow through; there is no opposition made to sin. But where the grace of God lives and moves in the heart, it is Old London Bridge. And just in proportion as the dam opposes and keeps back the water that comes in like a flood, shall we feel the rushing of sin against the narrow arches, and fear sometimes that the power of evil will carry the bridge and us all away together.

So again, with respect to every gracious thought and act, as prayer, meditation, reading the Scriptures, abstaining from evil, watchfulness and circumspectness: only so far as we are blessed with living faith can we spiritually do these things. If a man do these things formally and hypocritically, as the acts of mere bodily exercise, he may be wholly free from the temptations, perplexities, and harassing insinuations of Satan that assail the soul that seeks to worship God in spirit and in truth. But if a man has the power of grace in his heart and a living principle of faith in his conscience, whereby he sets himself against the subtle workings of the flesh, he will soon feel how helpless he is toward anything spiritually good, and how he needs perpetual supplies of life and power from the Lord.

4. "*Love*" is another grace that the Apostle urges his son Timothy to follow after. Love is the grand cementing bond of union between Christ and the members of his mystical body.

Well then may we earnestly follow after this as the choicest gift the Lord has to bestow. But I may say of this, as of all the other graces that God the Spirit bids us follow after—our want of it makes us desire it. Do we never feel the workings of enmity against God, rebellion against his holy law, or coldness toward his dear people? Do we not sometimes seem as destitute of love toward God and his people, as if we had not one grain of spiritual affection? But if we had never felt some flowings out of love toward God and toward his people, we should not wish to follow after it. We cannot follow after a thing that is not desirable; we do not desire a thing that has no value in our eyes. But when we know what a blessed grace love is, from having at times enjoyed a measure of it, and felt our hearts warmed by it to God and his people, and find how cold and lifeless we are without it, the very sense of want creates a following after it, and a pleading with the Lord to shed abroad his love in our hearts. A sincere and hearty confession of our coldness in his ways, and of our want of love towards his people, is really a following after it. And is it not better far, in our secret chamber, on our midnight bed, in some lonely corner where none but the eye of God sees us, to be mourning over our want of love, and beseeching the Lord to bestow this heavenly gift upon us, than to be engaged in "questions and strifes of words," and "with perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds?" Is not this secret panting after the gift of divine love far better than to be continually angling and wrangling upon knotty points of divinity, and cutting down all who differ from us? Is it not far more profitable, in the solitude of our heart, to feel our want of love, and plead with the Lord to bestow it upon us, than to display our fancied wisdom before men, or by slandering and backbiting, seek to exalt ourselves at the expense of others?

5. The next grace which the Apostle urges the "man of God" to follow after, is "*patience*." But why is patience needed?

Because if we are the Lord's people, we are sure to have many trials. The Lord sends us afflictions that he may give us the grace of patience to bear them. But O, what a rebellious heart do we carry in our bosoms! What perverseness, peevishness, and self-will dwell in its! How soon our temper is stirred up, and our irritable minds roused in a moment by the veriest trifle! How little patience have we under the trials that God sees fit to lay upon us! The Lord afflicts some of his people with weakly tabernacles; and how impatient they sometimes are under this dispensation! He sees fit that others should be tried with a persecuting partner in life; and how peevish and fretful they often are under this trouble! Others he is pleased to afflict with disobedient offspring; and how murmuring and rebellious are they when their children are not what they would wish them to be! Others he chastens in providence, disappoints their schemes, blasts their prospects, and brings to poverty. Trial upon trial, embarrassment upon embarrassment, difficulty upon difficulty beset them on every side; and O, what peevishness and fretfulness, what hard thoughts of God, and what self-pity work in the carnal mind! We thus learn our need of patience, and that it is not a fruit of nature's soil. The want of it makes the soul follow after it; and when the Lord does give submission to his will, and enables his children to see how profitable these trials are for their souls, and how, but for this heavy ballast, they would certainly have been carried away into the world, they can see his merciful hand in their heavy affliction. Thus, sometimes by feeling peevish and rebellious, and thus knowing their need of patience; and sometimes by feeling submissive, and enjoying the sweetness of it, they see what a blessed grace patience is; as the Apostle says, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36.) Scarcely any grace do we more daily need than that of patience. We need it toward God, when he

crosses us in our schemes, thwarts us in our desires, and instead of shewing why he afflicts us, hides himself behind a thick cloud that neither faith nor prayer can pierce through. We need patience with each other, with the world, with our relations in life, and with the church of God. We need patience when anything is said or done to hurt our minds, wound our feelings, irritate our tempers, and stir us up to revenge. And what a mercy it is, under these sharp trials, to have patience, and thus follow the example of the blessed Lord, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. 2:23.) Perhaps you are a servant, and have a master or mistress who is wayward and irritable, or so harsh and oppressive that your carnal mind boils over with wrath. But what a mercy it is under such trying circumstances to have patience! Or, your partner in life may at times by unfounded suspicions and jealousies greatly irritate you. You feel it sometimes very much to affect your natural disposition, and stir up your easily excited temper. But what a mercy it is to feel a little patience under the trial, and to win by affection what we cannot obtain by sullenness! Our spiritual friends too often try our minds by cutting speeches, and these not always to our face. Our proud heart resents the injury, and would bid us draw the sword of revenge. But have we not always found that when we have taken the sword to strike down a brother, there was a concealed blade in the hilt which ran into our own hand? And thus we learn rather to bear and submit to injuries, and to desire that God may bless us with patience, than say, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

We thus gradually and slowly learn our need of patience: and being inwardly convinced that we have no power to work it in our own hearts, desire to follow after it, that it may be communicated by God the Spirit to our souls.

6. The last grace the Apostle desires this "man of God" to follow after is "*meekness.*" And O, what a blessed grace is this! What an exhortation do we find the Holy Ghost giving by the Apostle Peter to the women that profess godliness! "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair," (and perhaps, he would have added, "of putting flowers into it," had he lived in our time) "and of wearing of gold" (such as gold necklaces, and watches by the side), "or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament of meek and quiet spirit*, which in the sight of God is of great price." (1 Pet. 3:3, 4.) O what wise instruction does the Apostle give to those wives and daughters that profess godliness! And how he warns them against attiring themselves like the daughters of Belial, and following the women of Canaan in their love of gay and fashionable apparel, while they slight the inward adornings of the Spirit, such as kindness, gentleness, meekness, and humility! But how far better are these inward ornaments which the Spirit of God puts into the heart! And how much more comely do they look thus spiritually attired than if loaded with all the finery that the daughters of Belial array themselves in!

But how are we to follow after this grace of meekness? By learning the contrary. I have had at times a contentious spirit, and (more especially formerly) have, no doubt, carried this spirit into the ministry, whilst endeavouring sincerely and honestly to contend for the truth of God. But "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" and thus, as the Lord the Spirit leads us on, we shall flee from our own spirit, and cease from strife and contention. Not that we shall be a whit less faithful, God forbid! Nay, the more we feel the power of truth, shall we with greater faithfulness contend for it: but we shall contend more in the spirit of meekness. How

often have we mistaken false fire for the light and fire of God's Spirit! and have contended more for our own views, in our own spirit, with many rash and unbecoming words, rather than for the glory of God. But after a time we are led to see that strife and contention, in our own spirit, are contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel, and are brought to see what a blessed grace the spirit of meekness is. Nay, the very want of it, the risings up of an excited temper; the anger, strife, envy, and jealousy that often work in our bosoms convince us how little we know of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." We thus feel what a blessing it is to be made humble and submissive; and how impossible it is to enter into communion with a broken-hearted Jesus, till the soul is in some measure weakened by his Spirit. But it is by having a succession of things to try and provoke us, that we learn whether we have meekness or not. The husband can be very meek, while his wife and children are doing everything to please him; but where is his meekness when they thwart and provoke him? The master may be very meek, while the servant is obedient, obliging, and attentive; but how is he when things are different? Thus the knowledge of the disease makes us desire the remedy; and by the wretched sensations caused by wrath and evil temper, we are brought to desire an experience of those sweet feelings which gospel meekness produces in our consciences.

These, then, are the graces of the Spirit which Paul exhorts his dear Son Timothy to follow after. Now, if you are a reckless Antinomian, and have plenty of notions in your head, but are destitute of God's teaching in your heart, you will not want to "follow after" these graces of the Spirit; you will be satisfied with a name to live, and call all such exhortations the very dregs of legality. But if God the Spirit has wrought with power upon your conscience, you will say,

Lord, these are the things my soul desires to follow after; I feel my deficiencies, and how short I come in these matters! How little do I know of righteousness, faith, love, patience, and meekness! How wofully defective in these inward graces and blessed teachings! But, Lord," the soul says in simplicity and sincerity, "I desire to follow after them, and to be possessed of them; to have them revealed in my heart, and wrought in my conscience by the power of God the Spirit." So far, then, from kicking and rebelling against these wholesome and sound truths, we shall be grieved that we come so short of the graces of the Spirit, and earnestly desire to be led into a deeper experience of them.

To sum up all in a few words. Here are the things which God the Spirit bids us flee from; and here are the things which he bids us to follow. And may I not say with the Prophet, "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him?"