

Fourth — II Timothy 2:22 — Flee From Youthful Lusts

“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (NASB)

Paul exhorts Timothy to beware of the desires that are common to youth. Even though Timothy was apparently a good man (II Timothy 1:5), Paul felt it necessary to give him this special warning. Some Bible scholars believe that this warning to Timothy encompassed more than just sexual desires. Youth often provides a fertile soil for many traits that the wisdom of age will mellow — traits such as impulsiveness, boastfulness, unwarranted pride, ostentatious displays and other such traits that youth must especially be on guard against. John also has some words of wisdom directed to young men.

“¹⁴...I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the World. ¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.” (I John 2:14-16)

So we see from these Scriptures that there *are* indeed certain things that we *should* turn and run away from rather than fight. Notice however, that each of these four instances involves a temptation of some sort that will lead to sin if one does not quickly get away from the source of the evil. Fleeing from temptation is quite different than fleeing from confrontation as a result of defending God’s Word or one’s faith. It’s imperative that as Christians, we understand the difference. Christians should *always* flee from temptation. Christians should *never* flee from defending their faith in Jesus Christ and the Truth of His Word.

Just a couple of additional thoughts about fleeing from temptation — if Eve had never even engaged in a discussion with Satan in the Garden of Eden, she would not have been tempted in the manner that she was (Genesis 3). And let us not forget that Jesus Himself told Satan to “*get thee behind me*” (Luke 4:8). God promises to give us the strength to flee when we should flee.

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (I Corinthians 10:13 NIV)

So we saw in five earlier articles that with proper preparation God will provide us with the armor to fight when we should fight. And we saw in this article that he gives us the strength to flee when we should flee. Let us *always* discern the difference.

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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Special Note — To those of you who wondered why you had received the previous issue of Diligence so very early — yes, the date on that issue was not correct. This is the May 1st issue. The previous one should have been dated April 15th. The correct dates will be shown on the web site. Sorry for the error and thanks for keeping us on our toes.

Fight or Flee?

The following is an excerpt taken from the March 15, 2004 issue of *Diligence*. (That issue can be viewed online at www.gorfsystems.com/diligence/)

“...it might be worth noting that through all of the verses in Ephesians that describe the Christian’s armor, there is no armor for the back. Turning our back on the enemy will leave us completely exposed to the attack. Apparently God intended for Christians to face the enemy head-on — with an offensive attack — not turning and running away in fear of confrontation. The armor is sufficient for the fight.”

In this issue, we will be discussing this paragraph in more detail than space allowed in that previous issue. Specifically, we will focus on the phrase “*Apparently God intended for Christians to face the enemy head-on — with an offensive attack — not turning and running away in fear of confrontation.*”

If you recall, that paragraph was included in an article that was part of a series of five articles that dealt with Satan, the way he works to deceive us, and the armor described in Ephesians 6:10-20 with which Christians should arm themselves. The context of those five articles dealt with the opportunity, the ability and the responsibility of Christians to *offensively* battle the evil schemes of the Devil. Throughout the Scriptures, there are numerous examples of individuals who went to their death doing that very thing. There is never any indication that a Christian should shy away from standing up for the Word of God. The Apostles suffered much because of their willingness to teach and to defend the Gospel. II Timothy 1:7 tells us that God did not give us “*a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*” It’s very clear in the Bible that God intends for us to be on the offense where His Word is concerned. Christians *are* to face the enemy head on. We *are* to always be prepared to do battle with Satan when it involves standing up for God and for defending the Truth of His Word. Fear of confrontation should not be part of the vocabulary of Christians in reference to defending their faith.

Now, having said this, while there is not one single instance in the Scriptures that gives an example of, or instructs a Christian to turn his/her back and run from defending the Truth, there *are* certain things and certain situations that a Christian may face where the Scriptures *clearly* instruct him or her to flee from or to run away from rather than attempt to fight. There are four specific instances that come to mind. It is those four Scriptures that we will be discussing in this issue.

First — I Corinthians 6:18-20 — Flee From Sexual Immorality

“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” (NIV)

Throughout the Scriptures we see that the only safety in temptations of the flesh is to flee from them. In Genesis 39:6-12 we read of how Joseph handled a difficult situation involving Potiphar’s wife.

“...Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.” (NIV)

This is of course not the end of this incident. The rest of chapter 39 and several others following it make for some very interesting reading. But that’s not the focus of this article so let’s look at a statement from another Biblical character who avoided any occasion for sexual immorality. Job 31:1 states —

“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.”

It’s clear, Christians are to *flee* from temptations involving sins of the flesh.

Second — I Corinthians 10:14-21 — Flee From Idolatry

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.” (NASB)

In these verses, Paul is saying that the feasts that were held in the pagan temples were not as innocent as they seemed to be. In the way that the Lord’s Supper speaks of the Christian’s unity with Christ, the pagan banquets were given in the honor of idols and therefore spoke of unity with the demons. While Paul agreed that an idol in and of itself was nothing at all, the demons were capable of taking full advantage of man’s ignorant and self-serving worship. Paul’s point was that they were disgracing the Lord’s Table when they fellowshiped with idols at pagan feasts. Even though the Corinthians didn’t *intend* to worship demons, their participation in such misdirected feasts made them “*sharers in demons.*” So once again, the warning is to not even tamper with doubtful acts, such as joining in pagan feasts based on the plea of Christian liberty. The only safety is in *completely shunning* anything that even hinted of idolatry.

Third — I Timothy 6:9-12 — Flee From The Love Of Money

“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith...” (NIV)

These verses clearly instruct the Christian to flee from the love of money with all of its evil results. It’s easy for the Devil to “bait his hook” and snare those who lust after wealth. Joshua 7:21 tells of a man named Achan who the Devil was able to easily snare with only a garment and some silver and gold.

“When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.” (NIV)

The temptation that the Devil used to snare Achan is just as effective today as it was then. In the first Scripture listed above, Paul said that some “*wandered from the faith*” because of their love for money. In the following Scripture Peter states that “*greed*” may even cause some to introduce destructive heresies by making up stories that will dishonor the Truth so that many will follow them.

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up...” (I Peter 2:1-3 NIV)

The love of money can cause individuals to fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Contentment comes from godliness in the heart, not money in the hand. Christians are to *flee* from the lust for money.