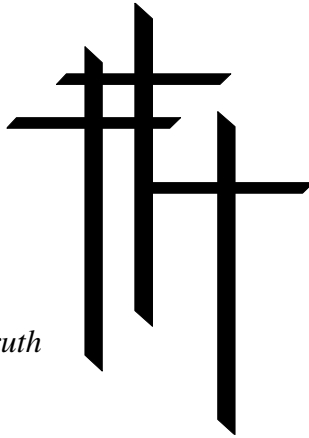


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



Volume 67 No. 4

April 2007

THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD

by John D. LaVier

Several years ago we heard one of the Lord's servants make a rather remarkable statement. He said, "I would not give you my spirit, even if I could. Because if I did you would know too much about me."

We can all appreciate the above statement, for each of us would undoubtedly shrink from having our fellow man know us as we really are. And yet God has given us His Spirit. Why? Because He wants us to know Him fully. He will hide nothing from us, for

our greatest blessing is the knowledge of Himself. So we read:

"But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in

him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:9-11)

Verse 9 does not refer, as some suppose, to the wonders awaiting us in heaven, for that is not the subject. The subject is the deep and precious truths which God has for his full-grown children. Also, verse 9 should never be separated from verse 10. Many quote verse 9 alone and then conclude that we must remain in ignorance, but verse 10 says that the Spirit knows "the deep things of God" and He reveals them to those who are willing to be taught. These deep things are found in the Word of God, and we must study the Word in dependence upon the Holy Spirit and then He will make them known. Yet many of God's people are like the Corinthians and lack the knowledge. Therefore, they must be dealt with as carnal instead of spiritual. They must be fed with milk instead of meat. Instead of the "deep things" their knowledge of God and His Word is very shallow.

Surely this is inexcusable when God has given us of His Spirit in order that we might be illumined and instructed.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Cor. 2:12)

We have received ... the Spirit which is of God. What a surprising and wonderful thing that God should have given to us His Spirit to bring us into communion with Himself and to open up to us His deep things. He could not have given us a greater gift. How much do we appreciate it? And do we indeed recognize the presence within us of the Spirit which is of God?

**What moved Thee to impart
Thy Spirit from above,
Therewith to fill our heart
With heavenly peace and love?
’Twas love, unbounded love to us
Moved Thee to give Thy Spirit thus.**

THE CHOICE

Selected

I said, “Let me walk in the fields.”
He said, “Nay, walk in the town.”
I said, “There are no flowers there.”
He said, “No flowers, but a crown.”

I said, “But the sky is black,
There is nothing but noise and din.”
But He wept as He led me back;
“There is more,” He said, “there is sin.”

I said, “But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun.”
He answered, “Yet hearts are sick,
And souls in the dark undone.”

I said, “I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say.”
He answered, “Choose tonight,
If I am to miss you, or they.”

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, “Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in Heaven
To have followed the steps of your guide.”

I cast one look at the field,
Then set my face to the town.
He said, “My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?”

Then into His hand went mine,
And into my heart came He,
And I walk in a light divine
The path I had feared to see!



**Grace Bible Church
Fort Worth, Texas**

June 4-8, 2007

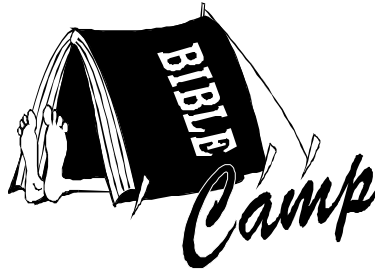
Grace Bible Church in Fort Worth will hold their Vacation Bible School June 4-8 this year from 9:30 to Noon each morning. There will be classes and activities for ages 3 to 14. There will be pizza and ice cream for lunch on Friday.

**Eleventh Avenue Church
Mineral Wells, Texas**

June 4-8, 2007

Eleventh Avenue Church in Mineral Wells will hold their Vacation Bible School June 4-8 this year with activities each evening from 7:00 to 8:00 pm.

Family



JULY 2-6, 2007

**Camp Arrowhead
Glenrose, Texas**

Our Family Bible Camp will be held at Camp Arrowhead in Glenrose, Texas the week of July 2-6. The theme this year will be "The Wondrous Cross." There are activities and Bible studies for all age groups.

Registration forms will be available soon. If you would like one, you can write us at:

Grace Bible Church
1450 Oak Hill Road
Fort Worth, TX 76112

Or you can access the form online at our website:

gracebiblechurch-fw.com

TIMELY MESSENGER

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(817) 451-0937
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Gregg Bing — Editor

Sent **free** to anyone upon request. If you live in the Fort Worth area, we invite you to worship with us.

Sunday Services:

10:00 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Morning Worship
6:00 PM Evening Worship

Mid-Week Services:

Tues. 10:00 AM Ladies Class
Wed. 7:00 PM Bible Study

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If so, please notify us at the above address. Be sure to include both your name, your old address and your new address. This will help us keep our mailing list current and thus reduce the cost of postage.

Thanks for your help!

THE MAN OF GOD — PART 6

By Gregg Bing

Continued from last month.

“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.” (1 Tim. 6:11-12)

In this series, we have examined two traits which characterize the “man of God”: what he flees and what he follows after. This month, we will consider the third trait which distinguishes the man of God: what he fights for.

FIGHT

The “man of God” is a fighter. We don’t often associate fighting with living

the Christian life. While Jesus once described Himself as “gentle and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29), many people assume He was passive, even weak. We sometimes see Him portrayed this way in movie versions of His life. The truth is that Jesus was a “fighter.” Certainly Jesus was not a brawler; He didn’t physically fight anyone, nor did He argue with people, but He always took a firm stand for the truth of God. For instance, Jesus was not afraid of offending the scribes and Pharisees when He confronted them regarding their religious traditions and how these traditions caused them to transgress the commandment of God (Matt. 15:1-14). When He found moneylenders and merchants conducting their sordid business in the temple, Jesus boldly kicked over their tables and seats and drove them out, quoting the Scripture which declared: “My house shall be

called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves” (Matt 21:12-13). Jesus openly and repeatedly warned the Jewish people about the hypocrisy of their religious leaders, declaring these self-righteous men to be the “sons of those who murdered the prophets” (Matt. 23:1-36).

Paul directed Timothy, as a man of God, to “fight the good fight of faith.” What did he mean by this? Both the verb and noun forms of “fight” are used in this verse. The Greek words they are translated from are the words *agonizomai* (verb) and *agon* (noun), from which we get our English words *agonize* and *agony*. *Agony* speaks of great mental or physical pain. Years ago, a television program called ABC’s *Wide World of Sports*, opened by claiming they covered every aspect of the sporting world, from “the thrill of victory” to “the agony of defeat.” The video clip they used to illustrate the “agony of defeat” was a ski jumper falling and crashing through a fence. While this may be

an appropriate picture of the agony of a sports defeat, it does not accurately reflect what the Greek *agonizomai* and *agon* mean.

The Greek word *agon* (fight) was used to refer to an athletic contest or game (like the Olympic games which originated in Greece). The writer to the Hebrews spoke of believers running “the race (*agon*) that is set before us.” Paul often compared the Christian life to an athletic endeavor (1 Cor. 9:24-25, Phil. 3:14, Eph. 6:12). The word *agon* is also used to refer to a conflict (Phil 1:30, Col. 2:1) or a fight against one’s adversaries (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:7).

The basic idea of “agonizing,” whether in a contest or a conflict, is struggling through tremendous difficulties or dangers. Kenneth Weust, in his *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, points out the gravity of this struggle as he comments on Greek boxing matches:

“... the gloves of the Greek boxer were fur-lined on the inside, but made on the outside of

ox-hide with lead and iron sewed into it, and the loser in a wrestling match had his eyes gouged out.”

Clearly the stakes of the Greek contest (*agon*) were often life and death. This is why those engaged in such a struggle prepared for it with great zeal and labored with all their might when actually engaged in the fight.

The man of God is engaged in just such a life and death struggle: one which has powerful adversaries, one which is fraught with great difficulties and dangers, and one which requires the most earnest and diligent labor on our part. We must remember that, as believers, we are not only to be “servants of the Lord,” we are also to be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).

Of Faith

What is the nature of this fight? What is this fight all about? Paul referred to it as “the good fight of faith,” hence it is a spiritual fight. Paul spoke

to the Corinthians about the nature of this spiritual warfare:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

Our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual enemies in heavenly places, spiritual hosts of “the wicked one” (Eph. 6:12), which is Satan himself. Thus, if we are to succeed in this fight, the strength, the armor, and the weapons we utilize must be those provided by the Lord.

The Faith

In the Greek, the word for *faith* in the expression “the good fight of faith” is preceded by the definite article, so it literally reads

“the faith.” We have seen in this series that when this is the case, then “the faith” speaks of the body of truth we place our faith in. Paul makes reference to “the faith” this way numerous times, especially in the pastoral epistles (letters to pastors).

On one level, “the faith” refers to the entire Word of God, an issue which has become one of the great spiritual battlegrounds in these last days of the dispensation of grace. Over the years, we have seen many churches and denominations, which once stood firmly for the truth of God’s Word and the inspiration of the Scriptures, turn away from this fundamental doctrine. Paul warned Timothy of those who have “a form of godliness” but “deny its power,” and he instructed Timothy: “for such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5).

In Paul’s final charge to Timothy, he once again stressed this problem, saying:

“... the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but

according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

This is exactly what we see in our society today. As more and more people turn away from the Word of God, they are easily turned aside to fables or myths. Who is at the source of this apostasy? The answer is found in 1 Timothy 4:1-2:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron...”

How does the man of God respond to such a discouraging trend? Paul’s charge to Timothy was: “Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffer-

ing and teaching (doctrine)” (2 Tim. 4:2). Having warned Timothy of the apostasy, he said: “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister (servant) of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of [the] faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed” (1 Tim. 4:6).

As we can see from this last verse, Paul also used the expression “the faith” to refer, specifically, to the truth of the mystery, the message God revealed to and through him for this present dispensation of grace. Satan hates the message of God’s grace; it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe it (Eph. 2:8-9), and it puts to rest any reliance upon man’s religion, as it plainly declares we are “complete in Christ” (Col. 2:9-17). From the time Paul began to fully unveil this glorious mystery, Satan has opposed it and sought to turn men away from it. When Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, he in-

formed him, “all those in Asia have turned away from me” (2 Tim. 1:15). This departure from Paul was not just because he was in prison; Paul had been in prison numerous times before. The real problem was the message he was proclaiming: the gospel of the grace of God and the revelation that God was forming a new body of believers, the church the body of Christ, in which all distinction between Jew and Gentile was done away. It is sad to say that this situation still exists today. How few there are who hold fast to and faithfully proclaim the truth of the mystery revealed by God through the Apostle Paul. The man of God stands firm for this truth (2 Tim. 1:13-14) and faithfully proclaims it to others (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

Good Fight

As we undertake this fight “of faith,” we need to take note that Paul referred to it as “the good fight.” The word *good* is from the Greek word *kalos* which means beautiful, excellent,

useful, admirable, praiseworthy, and honorable. This word referred to the way the Greek athlete conducted himself in the contest. We, too, must be careful to engage in the fight of faith in a useful, honorable, commendable, and praiseworthy manner.

In 2 Timothy 2:16-26, believers are specifically told to “shun profane and idle babblings” and to “avoid foolish and ignorant disputes.” The servant of the Lord must not strive (quarrel) with others. Such foolish questions and heated arguments have no spiritual benefit to anyone, but only generate more strife, envy, and ungodliness (1 Tim. 6:3-5, 2 Tim. 2:16-18, 23-24).

How can the man of God “fight the good fight of [the] faith” honorably, commendably, and in a manner worthy of God’s praise? If we are to effectively fight this fight, we must:

- 1) Rest in God’s *Power*
2 Tim. 2:1, Col. 1:29.
- 2) Continue in *Prayer*
Col. 4:2, Eph. 6:18.

- 3) Diligently *Prepare*
1 Cor. 9:27, 1 Pet. 3:15.
- 4) Expect *Persecution*
1 Cor. 16:9, 2 Tim. 3:12.
- 5) Endure *Patiently*
2 Tim. 2:3, Heb. 12:1.
- 6) Focus on the *Prize*
Phil. 3:14, Heb. 12:2.

The man of God is commanded to be continually fleeing, following after, and fighting certain things, but the key to realizing this in our lives on a daily basis is found in the latter part of 1 Timothy 6:12: “lay hold on eternal life.”

Next month we will look at this expression, considering what it means and how it can tremendously impact our lives, our relationships with the Lord, and our service for Him.

(Continued Next Month)

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

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- Points to Ponder
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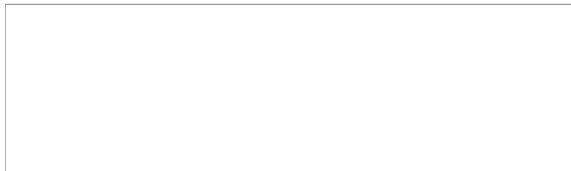
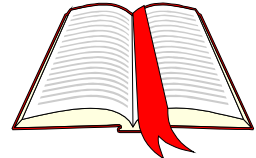
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