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God's Man

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"But thou, O man of God..." (1 Tim. 6:11).

"O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee" (1 Tim. 6:20).

"O man of God... O Timothy". In these words you will sense a strong and intense going out of heart on the part of the Apostle. It is a cry, an appeal, as though the floods have welled up and are seeking to break out. You see, the Apostle is on the last lap of the race, he is near to the end of his course, he is conscious that he has very little time left in which to say all that is in his heart - and there is so much to say, the situation is so critical, the need is so great; and in this final stage he is speaking his last words. They are the last words of a great Apostle. He tries to condense into small space a greatness of desire, and so he breaks out - "O man of God"! "O Timothy"! Last words are always words to be taken account of, noted, regarded with solemnity.

We are not able, of course, in a brief space to note all the content of these last utterances of the Apostle, and I propose only to speak of the nature of the appeal which he makes and the way in which he makes it. This exclamation - "O man of God"! - is not an unfamiliar phrase. We know how often in the Old Testament it is the designation applied to servants of God; and there is a sense, of course, in which it is a specific term, the title of those who stand in a peculiar responsibility for the Lord's interests - "the man of God". But there is also a sense in which it is of general application, for surely this should be true of us all; surely this does represent what the Lord would have in the case of every one of us, the title "man" covering us all in Christ, and the designation resting upon us all - "man of God". An old missionary received a very heartening message one day from a man whom he had led to the Lord out of heathenism many years before. Another missionary was visiting that quarter and came upon this man, who asked after his old spiritual father and said, 'When you see

him, tell him that so long ago I became God's man, and I am still God's man'. That is just what it is - all men of God, God's men.

A Challenge

Put like that, we can see how it can and should apply to us all. 'O God's man!' - which of course covers the woman as well; and in the very meaning and tone of that outburst from the Apostle's heart there is the message. We do not need to try to break it up and expound it to bring in all that it means to be God's man; the message is just there. It might startle us individually if someone approached us and addressed us in that way. Think of anyone coming to you and saying, 'O Man of God!' It is a challenge. The very idea brings us up short at once - 'A man of God!' Have you ever thought of yourself like that - as God's man? Amongst all men, you are God's man, God's woman; and because that is true, all the rest follows. All that Paul had to say to Timothy followed on that and came because of that. 'You are God's man; therefore I say to you all these things that I am saying and am going to say.'

The Responsibility of God's Man

(1) A Trustee Careful of His Trust

And you notice that certain lines run through these two letters to Timothy, and one of those lines has to do with himself as God's man - as to the supreme concern of God's man. Paul says firstly, 'Because you are God's man, you are a trustee'. "O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee" (1 Tim. 6:20). Literally, 'O Timothy, guard the trust', or, 'guard the deposit'. It is a banking term in the original language: someone has placed in the safe keeping of the bank something very precious and made the bank their trustee. And Paul says to Timothy, 'O Timothy, because you are God's man, you are a trustee; a great trust has been deposited with you'; and here there opens up all that is in these letters. Paul perhaps sat down to write a personal letter and to open his heart to Timothy as a father to a son - "Timothy my beloved child" he calls him - and perhaps he thought, 'I will say some heart-to-heart things to Timothy; he needs to be helped, advised, counselled'. But Paul finds that he cannot write on merely personal things; he is almost instantly caught away with the vastness of God's eternal thoughts, purposes and counsels. What there is of depth, profundity and vastness in these two short letters! Read them again, and see how far-reaching are the things mentioned. He says in effect, 'Timothy, the trust which has been deposited with you is no small thing; it touches all the ages and goes beyond them; it touches all realms. It is not just an earthly and temporal thing; not just your little life here as a Christian; no, far more is bound up with God's man than making a success of life here and now, according to this world's standards'. And so he says, 'You are a trustee; O Timothy, guard the deposit'.

And he does touch on some detail of that which may apply to some of us. 'From your infancy you have been taught the truth. Faith dwelt in your grandmother and in your mother. You are God's man with a responsibility; you have had the deposit of the truth. You are one of those who, out of the millions of your fellow men, have been brought, in the sovereign wisdom and grace of God, into touch with these supremely important and valuable things; you are responsible for them as God's man.' "I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels..." (1 Tim. 5:21); "I charge thee in the sight of God, Who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession..." (1 Tim. 6:13). 'I charge you, O man of God, before all heavenly intelligences and before men; you are in trust and have a great responsibility - not on the ground that you are a missionary, a minister, a pastor, or under some special designation in the

realm of God's servants, but simply on the ground that you are God's man, that is all'. That is what it means to be God's man. You are a trustee.

(2) A Soldier Concerned Only For the Lord

You are a soldier. "Take thy part in suffering hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier, on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3,4). The appeal is - 'As God's man, you are supposed to be all the time on active service and must not be of a divided mind, a divided heart, with dual interests weakening you in the warfare, preoccupied with things of this world; but, whatever your work may be on the earth, you are to be of an undivided mind, of a single heart. Your one concern must be to give satisfaction to Him Who enlisted you to be His soldier; O man of God, that is how you should be; a man with but one passion - to bring satisfaction to your Lord'.

(3) A Husbandman Ready to Labour

'And', he says, 'you are a husbandman'; and "the husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6). By that he means, 'You have to labour'. The true husbandman, the true farmer, knows all about labour, if any man does. He is qualified to talk about labour, and he knows that he will get nothing without hard work. He will be the first to partake of the fruits of hard labour. Of a man who really labours it can be said that his heart and his strength are in his work, he is given to his task because he knows that fruitfulness depends upon that labour.

(4) An Athlete Resolute to Win the Prize

And he says, You are an athlete. "If a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). Timothy would call to mind the words which Paul had earlier written to the church at Corinth - "Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage" (1 Cor. 9:25-27). Timothy well knew with what self-discipline his father in the faith had run his course, and Paul did not hesitate to remind him of it (2 Tim. 3:10 etc.).

"O man of God"! This is what the man of God is to be. Whether it be in the realm of the contest, or the warfare, or the hard toil of the field, or the trusteeship of riches - whatever metaphors are used, they all have but one purpose. The aged apostle seeks to utter something that lies heavily on his heart. 'O man of God! O Timothy! This is what should be true of you if you are God's man'. It is a heart cry - the heartbreaking cry - of a man who says, "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come" (2 Tim. 4:6). 'I shall not be able to say much more, but I make this full-hearted appeal to you, O man of God!'

One line through the letters is just that - what God's man is and what he is like. There are other lines which we will not pursue, as I want to leave that one note of emphasis with you. I have found myself gripped, not so much by the content of the letters of Paul to Timothy but by the cry of the Apostle, as if that cry had entered into me. All I can do is to re-echo it in this very feeble way. It is true that, in the sovereignty of God, Paul had a brief spell of liberty from prison between the writing of the two letters to Timothy. I think he was a little surprised about that himself. But it was only a little while at most, before he was brought back to prison and he knew that very soon his course would be ended. "I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). But he makes this the basis of a fresh appeal for diligence and urgency - "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus..." (2 Tim.

4:1). It is the end and it is a cry. Though in our case the details are different, nevertheless the same cry of the Spirit should surely reach our hearts today. There is an urgency. It is not merely the urgency of a closing ministry, but of a man of God who yearns that every one who may be called God's man, God's woman, should be like this - intent, utterly abandoned to one thing. You may be literally a soldier, a farmer, a banker; you may be anything literally on this earth; but over and above that, you are God's man. Your earthly vocation has to be made to serve God's ends; you have to be bent upon these eternal things, with undivided heart; not distracted by conflicting interests, not influenced at all by earthly circumstances, not preoccupied by things of this world, its pleasures, its gains, its successes amongst men; but motivated by this one thing - to please Him Who enrolled you as His own. Listen with the inner ear to the inward implication - "O God's man"! If only you and I could get hold of what is in that - 'God's man'! I am *God's* man, I am *God's* woman. What ought such a person to be like? Well, above all things, on God's interests bent. "O man of God"! That is a comprehensive word, but it becomes personal - "O Timothy". Amongst God's men, O Timothy, you - you are marked out by Him as His man.