

22. September 2023

## The good fight of faith

1 Tim 6:3-12

*If any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit, he knows nothing; he has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among men who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and[a] we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

In the words of Saint Paul, abiding by the sound doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ is still the way of avoiding blindness from the fashions and trends of the times, from the confusions that have even penetrated partially into the Church.

The word "blindness" alludes to a very important aspect: false doctrines spread a kind of "false light", like a "false fire" that tries to lead us astray. They are particularly dangerous because they mix the true with the false and give the wrong answer to a legitimate concern.

For example, if mercy is communicated as if the sinner's conversion were no longer necessary, or as if sin were not really so serious because "God is so good", then the great truth and beauty of God's mercy would be misrepresented and people would end up being deceived.

In today's reading, St Paul warns us of a great evil, which is greed. It is incompatible with the way of true piety, for it is neither God-centred nor modest about the things of this world; it can even abuse piety for its own gain.

Once greed has taken possession of the soul, it wants to draw everything to itself and surrenders to the desire to possess more and more. Greed is not limited to material goods, but can also develop a certain ambition for spiritual goods, which, like material greed, deforms the person (for example, the desire to know everything, to read everything that is offered to us, etc.).

The Apostle teaches us that the people of God must not be corrupted by any of this, but are called to avoid unnecessary quarrels and to be content with what is essential for life. They are called to strive for virtue and to fight the good fight of faith.

If at that time it was a struggle to preserve the purity of the faith, both because of the attack of false doctrines and because of the confrontation with the Jews, today we too must fight the good fight of the faith, defending it from the influence of an increasingly ungodly world. We ourselves must consciously distance ourselves from every useless and harmful influence, without allowing the faith to be diluted and corrupted.

A great danger of our time is that sin is no longer recognised as sin, but is relativised. As a result, people no longer have the desire to live their lives according to God's will.

The spirit of relativism, which neither tolerates nor is willing to submit to absolute truth, is spreading more and more. In reality, this tendency is a terrible distortion that confuses the human mind, making it incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong and of recognising limits. In the worst case, evil ends up being considered good.

To defend ourselves against such foolish fires that blind man, the weapon to which we must resort is faith. But we must be careful that it is not contaminated by the spirit of relativism, but remains the same as that which the Church has preached since apostolic times. We must be very careful on this point and renounce any theological or pastoral trend that does not correspond to the authentic teaching of the Church. In this way we can adhere to the "sound doctrine" of the Apostles, following the advice given to Timothy by the Apostle of the Gentiles in today's reading.