

Fight the Good Fight of Faith (Part 1) **1 Timothy 6:11-12**

INTRODUCTION

- Begin with **2 Timothy 2:3-4**
- Think of the dramatic shift in perspective from peacetime to wartime mentality in our history
 - December 7, 1941 – Pearl Harbor attack
 - September 11, 2001 – World Trade Center attack
 - World War 2 – the Queen Mary ship was transformed from luxurious ocean liner to military transport vessel
- **CONTEXT: 1 Timothy 3:15** - Paul communicates the purpose of his writings in 1 Timothy - the type of character the men and women in the household of God should exhibit. He outlines the conduct that should mark believers.

Proposition:

- I. **The Fight:** What is the fight?
- II. **The Fighter:** Who is in the fight? The identity of the fighter.
- III. **The Flee:** What vices (dangers) must you flee in the fight?
- IV. **The Follow:** What virtues (orders) must you pursue in the fight?
- V. **The Finish:** What do we know about the end of this fight of faith?

So that: In light of our allegiance to the Commander in Chief of the Universe, we must daily commit to fight the good fight of faith as faithful soldiers called out by God to action, fleeing vice and following virtue, knowing the victory is ours in Christ.

I. The Fight: What is the fight?

In the center of this text of Scripture, we find the phrase that I have simply pulled out as the title of the message this morning and as the theme of our youth summer camp this past July. What does it mean to “fight the good fight of faith”?

- In the original Greek - ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως – it is literally translated as “fight the good fight of faith”
- This comes from the nearly identical statement in **2 Tim. 4:7** - As Paul writes from the literal pit of prison awaiting death, he says...”I have fought the good fight”

Fight - - comes from the Greek word ἀγωνίζομαι

- to engage in intense struggle, involving physical or nonphysical force against strong opposition—‘to struggle, to fight.’ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 495.

Many times, we see this family of Greek words used in metaphors that can imply either running or boxing or wrestling. To fight for “the faith” includes at least a struggle for the truth of the gospel, but it may also refer “in a broader way to the whole of his Christian life as a great contest requiring discipline and purpose”.

The use of the present tense for “fight” suggest a continuous struggle.

Throughout Scripture, and especially the writings of Paul in the New Testament, the Christian walk is compared to a fight or a war (see **1 Timothy 1:18**). The Christian walk is a battle, whether we like it or not, because we have a very real enemy.

This is not just any fight, but a fight for the faith from which some have wandered (comes from **vv. 10, 21**)

If we profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, we must realize we are in a spiritual war.

- **Heb 12:4** - war against sin
 - “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”
- **1 Peter 2:11** - war taking place in our own souls
 - “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation”
- **Jude 3** - contending (struggling) for the faith
 - “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed...
- **2 Tim 2: 3** - Timothy is referred to as a soldier for the gospel”
 - “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”
- **2 Cor 6:7** - weapons the believers must possess
 - “but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷ by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. ¹¹ We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. ¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.”
- **Eph 6:12** - reminds us our battle is not “against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.”

- **2 Timothy 4:7** – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** – “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”

What would be the opposite of living in the midst of a fight, or warfare?

- peace
- coasting
- relaxing
- ignore – we are not to “ignore” the devil and he will flee from you, but we are to RESIST the devil (**James 4:7**)
- ignorant -not aware anything is going on
- retreat - “*spiritual retreat is spiritual defeat*” - Platt

What are ways your faith is attacked?

- obedience and honor to parents
- purity; idea of biblical marriage; idea of gender created by God
- materialism
- unbelief; doubting
- worry; anxiety; despair

An overview of the spiritual warfare we face...from Platt (Christ-Centered Commentary)

- The enemy in this spiritual war is formidable (frightening, daunting, intimidating)
 - Satan cannot be taken lightly
- The scope of this spiritual war is universal (all-embracing)
 - The battle is cosmic
- The involvement in this spiritual war is inevitable (unavoidable)
 - You do not choose to be involved, yet are born into it, you can’t ignore it
- The stakes of this spiritual war are eternal (permanent, without end, forever)
 - How we fight this battle has eternal implications - friends, family, neighbors, classmates, coworkers...everyone is affected.

Application: Are you even aware that you’re at war? Does this thought determine how you live and make choices each day? What does it look like for a Christian to have a (spiritual) wartime mind-set?

II. The Fighter: Who is in the fight?

But as for you, O man of God (6:11) – the identity of the fighter

- the abrupt personal designation that opens Paul’s charge to Timothy reverses the focus of the apostle’s remarks. He had just upbraided the false teachers of Ephesus for their

corrupt doctrine and lifestyles, but now he instructs his godly child in the faith on how he ought to live.

“But you,” shows that Timothy’s behavior was to provide an utter contrast to that of the false teachers mentioned in **vv. 3–10** – READ these verses

Malachi 3:18 “Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.”

Application: Does your life demonstrate a clear contrast to the ungodly world around you? What would you use as evidence to make this point. See I am different because...look at what I value, what I prioritize, what I listen to, what I watch, what I say, what I do, what I love, how I love, what I hate, how I study, how I work, who my friends are???

What are some titles we use as Christians in relationship to God?

- Children of the Heavenly Father
- Children of the King of Kings
- Heirs of the King
- Followers of Jesus
- Disciples of Jesus
- Born-again believers
- Spirit-indwelled temples of God
- Slaves, bond servants – from the original Greek word *doulos*

“O Man of God” (6:11)

In the New Testament, this phrase is used only here and **2 Tim. 3:17...**

- 2 Tim 6:11 – personal appeal to Timothy
- 2 Tim 3:17 - general appeal
...that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Paul calls Timothy to do something because of his position in Christ. As a soldier in the army of God, Timothy should live differently.

The title **man of God** “connotes one who is in God’s service, represents God and speaks in his name.”

It should also be noted that the expression in the New Testament uses the original Greek generic word *anthropos* which is translated as “human being,” not “man” in the sense of male. SO, you ladies do not have a way out here. This is truth for all followers of Jesus Christ.

“Which you were called” (6:12) - the bookend in this passage of identity in Christ.

In **1 Tim 6:12**, the reference has more to do with the experience of salvation. Paul’s command was intended to stir up Timothy to renewed vigor, but it does not imply that Timothy earned

eternal life by self-effort. It suggests that “eternal life” is more of a goal toward which Timothy was to orient his efforts rather than a prize that God would give him as a reward for that effort. The fact that God had called him was an incentive for his response.

Do you ever consider your calling? If you have called out to God in faith, turning from your sin and trusting in the person and work of Christ alone for your salvation, you have been called!

A dead man cannot choose.

- “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.” – **John 15:16**

Read Eph 1 - look at the privilege and position you and I hold in Christ

Should this calling bring you any kind of pride? NO! You did nothing. It should bring you to a humble gratitude.

Application: Do you have a clear understanding of your identity. How does the idea of soldier clarify or magnify your understanding of identity?

2 Tim 6:15-16 - The One who calls - The Commander - “He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion.”

Application: Do you have a clear understanding of your God? How does God as Commander in Chief clarify or magnify your understanding of identity?

CONCLUSION

Illustration: I was reading an article recently on the life of John McCain. Much of his identity was marked by his father and grandfather. He was the son of a Navy Admiral and the grandson of a Navy Admiral. For much of his early life, he felt as though he was living in their shadows. All this changed when he spent 5 years as a POW in Viet Nam during that war. He returned to the United States with a new identity.

Application: Where is the source of your identity?

Next week we will continue with:

- III. **The Flee:** What vices (dangers) must you flee in the fight?
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