

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH (PART 2)
1 Timothy 6:11-12

INTRODUCTION

READ: **1 Timothy 6:11-12**

“But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.¹² Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Illustration: Recently there was a picture that was widely dispersed in the media of a group of golfers who continued to play on the golf course with an active volcanic eruption behind them, choosing entertainment in the midst of imminent danger.

In life there is danger all around us. If someone came into this room and yelled “fire”, we would probably run...especially if we saw smoke and/or flames.

John Piper says this about spiritual warfare: *“To just carry on our lives in this world as though it were in peacetime shows just how out of touch we are with a Biblical reality.”*

Illustration: When we see pictures of actual warfare, photos of soldiers with bombs going off all around, running and fleeing, with weapons in hand ready for battle, then we see and understand some of the intensity of battle. This is a very different picture than someone sitting in an armchair in the middle of this battle, just watching bombs going off all around him. And yet, that is how we often live in our spiritual life.

Review previous points from last Sunday (see previous sermon notes).

Outline: (Refer to last week’s sermon for points I and II)

- 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?**

Proposition (Big Idea): 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 that our victory is in Christ.

III. THE FLEE: What vices (dangers) must you avoid in the fight?

Such a common thing we as Christians should consider...what are we running from and what are we running to? (recall Colossians 3 - put off and put on)

I want to begin with some thoughts on the ENEMY. We are going to talk about what we are fleeing, but I think it is good to also be reminded of who we are fleeing.

- *“Satan aims to defame God’s glory, distort God’s gospel and destroy God’s people”*
David Platt
- 1 Peter 5:8 - describes the devil as a “roaring lion looking for anyone he can devour”

Flee evil that pulls you from God.

- Fight by fleeing, run from the fight in this instance.
- Sometimes running from a fight is the best way to avoid defeat
- We often don’t run because we aren’t convinced of the danger (recall the earlier illustration of the volcano erupting behind the golfers)

“these things” - things like materialism, quarreling, slander, arrogance- vv. **3-10**

Paul is warning:

- Flee the false teaching that marginalized Christ and his teaching (**v. 3**)
 - Religions that minimize Christ – that teach that Jesus isn’t God, or that you need to merit your way to heaven
- Flee petty “controversy and... quarrels about words” (**v. 4**)
 - Don’t be quarrelsome, be clear on the core truths and doctrines, but Satan loves to bring up petty things that can entangle us and get our eyes off our main focus
- Flee divisive talk (**vv. 4-5**)
 - We are to avoid words that break up or tear down
- Flee the religious delusion that imagines “godliness is a means of gain” (**v. 5**)
 - Flee that outward appearance that we have it all together and our godliness is our gain whereas we should focus on the internal perspective
- Flee the covetousness that drives us from contentment (**vv. 6-10**)
 - We need to be content with what we have and avoid the snare of wanting or desires that plunge us into discontentment

Consider 3 different ways we should run from evil:

1. Run from sinful actions
 - Sin usually starts with just a glance, a purchase, a step in the wrong direction, a click, etc
2. Run from sinful desires
 - **vv. 9-10**- Paul talks about desire for riches, love of money, cravings that pull you away from God
3. Run from sinful thoughts
 - Fight to believe God is better. Run from thoughts that question the goodness, satisfaction, adequacy or truthfulness of God
 - Our fight begins with our mind, our beliefs
 - Why do you lie? Because you believe things will go better for you if you do. This is contrary to what God says in Col 3:9; Ex 20:16

- Why do you give into sexual impurity? Because you don't believe purity is the best thing for you. You don't believe God's design is best.
- Why do you struggle with doubt and despair? Because you don't believe God will take care of you (Mat 6), He is good, and His promises are true (Heb 13)

Paul calls us to run. Flight as a spiritual strategy was crucial to Paul's philosophy of ministry.

Old Testament example: Joseph fled from temptation with Potiphar's wife.

I am reminded of **1 Corinthians 10:12-14** – “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry”

Application: How do we sometimes flirt with sin rather than flee from it? Are there some areas of overconfidence in your life where you are blinded to the wisdom of fleeing?

II. THE FOLLOW: What virtues must you pursue in the Fight?

It is not enough that men/women of God flee these things, but they must follow after what is directly contrary.

“Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness” – 6 virtues put in 3 pairs

“pursue” – idea of doing something with effort, striving, chasing, hunting;

- This same original Greek word was used in Acts to describe Saul and he pursued those who followed Jesus – he was hunting with effort

1. **Righteousness** (relationship of holiness)

- Obedience or conformity to a set standard (God sets the standard)
- Doing what is right before God and others
- “I want to do right”
- Conduct in accordance to God's will and is pleasing to Him
- A life or lifestyle in conformity to justice, law, or morality as given by God
- Jesus fulfilled all righteousness perfectly
 - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied., . . .Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake” Mt 5:6,10
 - “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Mt 5:20.
 - “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” -Mt 6:33.

2. **Godliness** – only used 15 times in the New Testament - 11 of those 15 times it is used in the Pastoral letters of Paul

- Piety – idea of spiritual fitness
- In pagan literature, godliness (Greek - eusebeia, eulabeia and related terms) meant showing proper caution, fear or reverence towards the gods
- Pre-eminently, Jesus is the godly One, whose prayers were heard because of his ‘godly fear’ or ‘reverent submission’ to the Father (Heb. 5:7- Jesus offered up prayers and was heard because of his reverence).
- This is our belief and behavior
- Warning against just showing a form of godliness (6:5; 2 Tim 2:5- form of godliness but denying its power
- Godliness in the list of virtues in 2 Peter 1

Next Paul commends the ultimate Christian virtues of “**faith**” and “**love**” (v. 11). Faith and love are a regular couplet in the Pastorals (1 Timothy 1:5; 2:15; 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:22; Titus 2:2).

1. Faith

- Deeper trust in God
- “Faith” is one of the first virtues mentioned in the Pastoral Letters: God’s work is “by faith” (1:4). At times the term faith refers to doctrine (esp. with the definite article), at other times it is a virtue or a quality of one’s relationship with Jesus.

2 Thess 1:3-4: “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 4 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.”

2. Love

- Greater affection for God
- John 15:9- abide in my love
- Consider the wonder of His love for you
- When you grow in your understanding of his love for you, you will grow in your love for Him, and then you will grow in your love for others.

Last on the list is “**steadfastness**” and “**gentleness**” These are especially helpful ministry qualities.

1. Steadfastness

- Endurance; patience in the midst of difficult circumstances
- Heb 3:14 – “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end”
- Steadfastness is “won’t quit” determination in the face of opposition to the gospel (2 Timothy 3:10)
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2. Gentleness

- Gentleness is not weakness
- Kindness toward difficult people
- Gentle strength, humble strength
- Gentleness is the quality of tender, patient self-control in dealing with people amid the difficulties of ministry—strength under control.

John Stott explains it: *“We are simply to run from evil as we run from danger, and to run after goodness as we run after success. That is, we have to give our mind, time and energy to both flight and pursuit.”*

SO, a lot to pursue here...but REMEMBER this is not gained by mere self-effort and determination, or grit. Our initial righteousness and ongoing righteousness is bought by the blood of Christ. Only as we are IN CHRIST do these things become a reality for us by the POWER of the SPIRIT (Phil 1:6; 2 Pet 1:3)

THE FINISH: What do we know about the end of this fight of faith?

Four success commands Paul gives ends with finishing strong or FASTENING yourself to Christ! SO, flee, follow, fight, and finish.

“take hold”

Illustration: Think of yourself fastening on your harness to a clip while rope climbing – as you begin to belay down the rock, you take hold of the rope and trust that the clip you are fastened will hold you.

In the same way, **take hold** of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Peacetime is coming, but it is not now!

“take hold of” - means “to take hold of, to grasp. . . sometimes with violence” or to “take hold of, in order to make one’s own.” (Bauer’s Lexicon)

- The “violence” in the word is seen when it is used to describe how Jesus “took hold of” Peter as he began to sink (Matthew 14:31)
- This same word is used to describe how the crowd “seized” Paul and dragged him from the temple (Acts 21:30).

Application: We are to **take hold** of the truth, the Gospel, our identity in the person of Christ and the work of Christ.

Application: Feeling like this fight is too much to handle on your own?

Consider:

- Paul’s final words in verse 21 were, “Grace be with all of you.”
- 2 Timothy 2:1 - Strengthened by grace in Christ Jesus

We are not left alone in this fight. We have been given all the resources necessary to fight.

CONCLUSION

If you have put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, be encouraged in this spiritual battle: we do not fight this war for victory; we fight this war from victory. Our ultimate triumph in this battle is assured because Christ Himself has conquered sin and death.

Phil 3:12-14

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”

Phil 1:6-11

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”