

Fight the Good Fight of Faith – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul encourages Timothy to fight the good fight of faith to the glory of God
2. aim – to cause us to fight for godliness, to make the good confession, until the coming of Christ
3. passage – 1 Timothy 6:11-16

b. outline

1. The Fight for Eternal Life (1 Timothy 6:11-12)
2. The Fight for the Good Confession (1 Timothy 6:13-14a)
3. The Fight for Endurance to Glory (1 Timothy 6:14b-16)

c. opening

1. **question:** what is it that defines a *healthy church*?
 - a. **obviously:** one with a sound *theology* – an orthodox view of the entire message of Scripture
 1. what Paul calls “*sound*” or “*good*” or not “*different*” doctrine in **1 Tim. 1:3, 10; 4:6; 6:3**
 - b. **additionally:** one that aligns with the ancient “marks” of a healthy church: where the Scriptures are properly taught, the ordinances are properly practiced, and *discipline is properly applied*
 1. **e.g.** *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Mark Dever) – expository preaching, sound theology, a right view of conversion, proper church membership, discipleship and discipline, etc.
 - c. **however:** all of these “marks” assume something in the church – they assume that the church will *place expectations on its people as the result of a sound theology*
 1. **note:** no one doubts that *people* place expectations *on the church* – everyone looks for a church that will “meet” their expectations in some particular area (**e.g.** music style, preaching style, ministries, programs, vision, etc.)
 2. **odd for many:** for *churches* to place expectations *on their people* – in many churches, you can be a “part” of the congregation without ever having to meet any explicit expectations (**e.g.** many churches moving away from membership to an “open” style of congregationalism)
 - d. **principle: a healthy church is one with a sound theology (orthodoxy) and a sound set of practices (orthopraxy), but that also places biblical expectations upon its people and its people desire (from the heart) to meet those expectations (orthopathy)**
 1. **orthopathy** = a right *emotional* response; a proper set of *affections*; the sense in which one’s beliefs and practices causes him or her to *desire* (**i.e.** love) to be held accountable
 2. **LOW:** it’s not enough to have a sound theology and “do church” in the right way – the people of the church should be *responding* to that theology and practice by *demanding* a set of expectations and then *pursuing* them out of a sense of great love for Jesus
2. this reality being placed upon Timothy (and all like him) in **1 Tim. 6:11ff**
 - a. **key phrase (title):** “*fight the good fight of the faith*” (**v. 12; see below**)
 - b. Paul gets very *personal* with Timothy (**v. 11; again**), and
 - c. Paul sets some *very high* expectations of Timothy
 1. even calling down an *oath* and a *doxology* to drive home his point (**vv. 13-16**)

I. The Fight for Eternal Life (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

Content

a. the flight from a love of money (v. 11a)

1. **question:** what does Paul mean by the phrase “*O man of God?*”
 - a. at first glance, the term appears to be a *title*, thinking of Timothy as a *minister of the gospel*
 1. as *popularly* used in **2 Tim. 3:16-17** – **i.e.** one who preaches using the *theopneustos* Word
 - b. but (in both cases), the term seems to refer more to **one who belongs to God**
 1. here, all of these verses are *deeply personal* rather than *professional*
 2. and in **2 Tim. 3**, Paul is referring to Timothy’s whole life, centered around Scripture, not just his work as a preacher or pastor using the Word to accomplish a task
 3. so, it seems highly likely that Paul is simply exhorting Timothy *as a believer*
 - c. which means this phrase can be applied to *any* Christian, not just Timothy (**i.e.** since every believer is a child of God, we can all be called “O man of God” or “O woman of God” or “O child of God”)

2. Paul uses a number of **action verbs** to describe the life that Timothy is (we are) supposed to live
 - a. “flee” and “pursue” and “fight” and “take hold of” and “keep” – the New Testament assumes, *from end to end*, that the Christian life is one of **action**
 1. **here:** Paul implies the **metaphor of a runner** – someone running away from something, while (at the same time) running towards something else
 - b. “flee” = run away from; escape from; avoid the danger of; shun them – the *imperative* sense of the verb implies a strong sense of *action* – when you see “these things,” run away from them
 - c. “these things” = from **6:9-10**, all of the sinful habits of those who desire to be rich, who love money more than Christ, who prioritize the things of this world more than eternal matters
- b. the pursuit of godliness (v. 11b)**
 1. Paul focuses on the **other side of the metaphor** – not only are we to run away from something, but we are also to actively run towards something else
 - a. “pursue” = press forward; follow in haste; seek after; lit. chase after until you catch it; chase it down
 1. the word is used **x30/45** in the N.T. as “persecute” – to chase someone down *because of their beliefs or practices*; to pursue and catch someone who *holds a variant position from one’s own*
 - a. **irony:** Paul *himself* was a persecutor of the church (**Phil. 3:6**) – in fact, he was “chasing” down believers at Damascus (to kill them) when he met Jesus on the way
 2. using this word, Paul intimates that what the Christian is to pursue is something *at variance to his or her fleshly desires* – something **not automatically natural** in the life of the believer
 - a. **i.e.** in contrast to the “natural” tendency to pursue wealth and riches
 - b. **i.e.** the Christian is to *purposely* pursue that which is contrary to his fleshly nature
 2. Paul lists those things that true Christians are to “chase down and catch” (in a sense, a similar list to the *fruit of the Spirit* given in **Galatians 5:22**) – **things contrary to their fleshly nature:**
 - a. “righteousness” = actions in concert with the law of God (**i.e. outwardly**, whereas justification is an *inward* righteousness declared by God through faith, this is *outward* righteousness of living in concert with one’s *position* as righteous by nature)
 - b. “godliness” (**see 6:3-8**) = imitating the nature of God himself; desiring to live consistently with the very nature of God as it is revealed in the law and in the gospel
 - c. “faith” = trusting in the promises of God throughout all of life; accepting the *terms* of the Covenant of Grace (**i.e.** coming to God with an “empty hand” of faith) and living as though you *truly believe* what God has said to be true
 - d. “love” = demonstrating the character of *genuine, biblical* love (*agape*) – not “emotionalism” as a *false form* of love (**i.e.** sentimentalism), but love that is based on *divine truth at its core*
 - e. “steadfastness” = endurance; perseverance; constancy – maintaining a *consistent* discipline of righteousness, godliness, faith, and love – not wavering “hot and cold”
 - f. “gentleness” (a *unique* Greek word from a known root) = showing meekness; “covering over” the pursuit of these other things with a genuine sense of concern for others (**e.g. 1 Peter 3:15**)
“... in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense [apologetic] to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”
 3. **principle: faith is not some passive sense of understanding, but a pursuit of a life consistent with that knowledge (changed minds → changed hearts → changed lives)**
 - a. the New Testament message of the Gospel teaches that our trust in Christ **launches us** into a life of *fleeing* from that which is *contrary* to God’s law and *pursuing* that which is *consistent* with it
- c. the fight for eternal life (v. 12)**
 1. **here:** Paul implies the **metaphor of a fighter** – to wage battle against the forces that have the *potential* to knock you down and take away your prize (**e.g.** a prize-fighter)
 - a. **e.g.** Paul uses this imagery again in **2 Tim. 4:7** – he viewed his life as a fight, a race he had won
 2. Paul assumes that a trust in Christ (faith) launches us into a fight – a “good fight” of “the faith”
 - a. contra so many who simply assume that “a profession of faith” is all that is needed for salvation – that there are *no requirements beyond a simple “assent” to the gospel message*
 1. **e.g.** the anti-Lordship movement within Fundamentalism – that “faith” does not require any *actualized* sense that Jesus is Lord over one’s life to be saved; that faith *cannot* require any “works” otherwise it becomes justification by works, not faith alone
 2. but, this denies the very essence of the gospel message of salvation
 - a. **i.e. Romans 10:9:** “if you confess ... Jesus is Lord ...” – a willingness to not only believe that Jesus has *conquered sin as a priest*, but a willingness to *utterly submit to him as king*
 3. but, this is an improper understanding of *faith itself* – faith is *active*, not *passive*
 - a. **i.e. James 2:14-26:** “faith without works is dead” – faith *must* demonstrate itself in acts *that flow out of that faith* for it to be *true faith* – simply “assenting” to truth is not saving faith

- b. *“take hold of”* = grasp; arrest; trap; catch; lit. be concerned for; battle against those things that would threaten to *“wrestle away”* from you what you possess
 - 1. **e.g.** similar to what Paul says in **Phil. 2:12**: *“work out your own salvation ...”* – live in such a way that you are *concerned for* the continuation of your salvation (**i.e.** not taking it for granted)
 - c. *“the eternal life”* = the goal of faith; the life that *begins* at an initial confession of faith, but *continues* through this *earthly existence* into eternity, into the presence of God himself (**see next week**)
- 3. **principle: faith is not some passive sense of salvation, but a fight to hold on to the very life God has granted us in Christ that lasts from now into eternity**
 - a. the New Testament message of the Gospel teaches that our trust in Christ **launches us** into a life of *fighting* to hold on to the assurances of God, even as our *flesh* fights against us
- 4. Paul **expects** Timothy to *“flee”* and *“pursue”* and *“fight”* and *“take hold of”*
 - a. **a healthy church sets these same expectations upon its people, and healthy Christians respond in healthy ways to them!**