

Called to Lead – Part II
Pastor Ty Blackburn
1 Timothy 6:11-12
June 22, 2014

Please turn in Bible to 1 Timothy, Chapter 6, continuing a message we began last Sunday. I mentioned earlier that we are in a season of nomination. Three Sundays in a row we are taking nominations for the office of elder and deacon. Today is the second of those three Sundays and so I wanted to take a break from our exposition of the book of John to take a look some passages that relate to what we should look for in leaders. So the title of the message last time was ‘Called to Lead’, and so this is ‘Called to Lead – Part II’.

We were looking at 1 Timothy 6:11-12, and so that is our passage. We’re actually going to read Verses 11-16 in a moment. ‘Called to Lead’, there are three points in the outline. We went over the first two last week, and for the outline I am indebted to John MacArthur. A sermon I heard him preach, and also his wonderful commentary on 1 Timothy, he notes how the man of God is known by what he flees from. We saw that last time, we talked about that. He is also known by what he follows after, secondly. And then thirdly, today, he is known by what he fights for. So the man of God, the man who would lead, is known by what he fights for.

We’ve acknowledged that this message applies to all Christians. We are all called to be people who lead people to Christ. We are called to make disciples. Every one of us ought to be people who somebody wants to follow, and we can say, “Follow me as I follow Jesus.” That is evangelism. So it applies to men and women alike, and especially though applies to men. When you get married you become a leader of your wife. When you have children, as a father you become a leader to your children. So we need to be people who are leading people to Christ. “Follow me as I follow Christ.” Be a man of God, and certainly the church needs men who can say that, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” The man of God is known by what he flees from. He is fleeing from sin, he is fleeing from the world, from temptation. He’s following after, he is pursuing righteousness and godliness, but what is he fighting for? The man of God is a man who must be willing to fight. He must be willing to fight when others are unwilling to fight.

I mentioned last week, a person that I’ve appreciated reading about, Winston Churchill, the prime minister of England. He became prime minister in 1940, at a very difficult time in the history of England. They had been soundly defeated, the British Expeditionary Force had been soundly defeated by the Germans and was

actually just evacuated from Belgium by the skin of their teeth. The Germans just pummeled them. They pummeled the French, they destroyed the Dutch. They had already destroyed Poland and then they came at the allies, and they just made mincemeat of them. The German's system of blitzkrieg was a combination of air attack and tanks. England was reeling, and in fact, when you read the histories, what people talk about is the mentality of the people of England. They were ready to surrender. They had all but given up. One commentator said that the national mentality could best be described with this one word—suicidal. There was no hope. But in God's providence, the man that was chosen to lead the nation at this pivotal moment was the man Winston Churchill. He made a number of speeches, and I want to read a couple of excerpts from two of his speeches that show that he was a man who was willing to fight at a time when fighting was all that you could do. It was what was needed. In one of his first speeches, May 13, 1940, after he became prime minister, he says:

You ask, "What is our policy?" Many wanted to sue for peace, to get the best terms we can with Hitler. You ask, "What is our policy?" I will say, "It is to wage war by sea, land, and air, with all our might, and with all our strength that God can give us. To wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalog of human crime. That is our policy." You ask, "What is our aim?" I can answer in one word, it is "Victory, victory at all costs. Victory in spite of all terror. Victory however long and hard the road must be."

Then things continue to deteriorate for the next three weeks. Things just went from bad to worse. France is about ready to exit the war, and England is about to be alone. He gives a speech on June 4, 1940 in which he encouraged the people as they are teetering on the edge, and led them to a sense of resolve that enabled them to withstand the full onslaught of Germany against England in *The Battle of Britain*. Read something about that and be encouraged just by the amazing resolve of the British people. On June 4, 1940, he said:

I had myself full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once more able to defend our island home, to ride out the storm of war and outlive the menace of tyranny. If necessary, for years. If necessary, alone. Even though many tracts of Europe, and many old and famous states have fallen, or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo, and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag, nor fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France. We shall fight on the seas and oceans. We shall

fight with growing confidence, and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields, and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.

It was that resolve that steeled the will of the British people, and they found in that leader the ability to stand up, and to win a great victory, and to hold the line until the Americans came into the war. The man of God is known by what he fights for. Let's read the text of 1 Timothy 6, Verse 11, we'll read to Verse 16. Paul writes to Timothy:

1 Timothy 6:11-16 ~ 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. 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that as we open Your word, that Your Spirit might open our hearts, that You might open our eyes. Grant that we might see wonderful things from Your law. Grant by Your grace that our hearts might be yielded, and surrendered more fully to our Savior. We pray in His name, Amen.

You know today, June 22, 2014, here in Duluth, Georgia, we are at war. Not anything any one of us desires, any sensible person does not want to be at war, but it is unavoidable. We are under attack, we have been, and we always will be until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The picture that we have in Scripture is that clearly we are in a state of continual assault. Therefore, what is needed in time of war is the mentality of a soldier, the mindset of a warrior. Now we can forget this, and we do forget this, and we would like to pretend it is not true. All of us would like that.

Jonathon and I watched a movie, I think it might have been the night of the anniversary of *D-Day*. The 70th anniversary was a few weeks ago, and we watched a movie about World War II. It was actually not about *D-Day*, it was about *The Battle of the Bulge*, but in that what we saw was the soldiers fighting to defend a city, and they are surrounded, they are hopeless, and they've got to be delivered from outside. They have been totally surrounded by the Germans. They go to sleep each night in their foxhole, knowing that at any moment they could be overrun, they could have a shell land in their foxhole, and be dead. Or they could have German bayonet thrust into them, as they finally, being surrounded, ends in their death. But when they go to sleep they forget that because I remember one of the interesting things was when the guy wakes up, and he starts talking about what he was dreaming about, and it was something back home. Something pleasant like cotton candy.

I was thinking about being at the fair and it hit me what an interesting thing that is. That when you are asleep you just don't have any idea of the reality of what is going on around you. Very often the Christian falls asleep and we forget that we really are in a warzone that is much more serious war than even what we are grateful to those that served to protect our freedom did in World War II, and all the other wars that Americans have fought, and are fighting today. But the reality is, we are at war, and that is what Paul is saying to Timothy, ***Fight the good fight of faith***;...It is interesting that that command, that exhortation, to be a warrior, is repeated twice in the book, 1 Timothy 6:12, I just read, ***Fight the good fight of faith***;... If you would turn back over to Chapter 1, Verse 18, Paul says this:

1 Timothy 1:18 ~ This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,...

He begins and ends this book, he brackets this letter to Timothy with that exhortation—***Fight the good fight***... He uses two different Greek words that together bring out the richness of what he is calling for, but both words, the word in 1 Timothy 6:12, and the word in 1 Timothy 1:18, both are in the present tense. That is, in the Greek present tense is more about not time of action, present time, it is more about the kind of action. It is continuous, ongoing action. So when he says, ***Fight the good fight***... he means, “Keep on fighting. Fight and continue to fight the good fight. There is no rest. Keep fighting the good fight.” In Chapter 6, Verse 12, he uses the Greek verb ‘*agōnizomai*’. We transliterate our English word ‘*agonize*’ from that. It is a word that was used to picture hand-to-hand combat.

It was sometimes used in two major arenas. One would be the arena of the public games, to wrestle, to fight for the prize, would be this word, 'agōnizomai'. But it was also used in the realm of military conflict, and it pictured in that time hand-to-hand combat, agonizing, life and death struggle. ***Fight the good fight...*** and when you combine that with 1:18, when he says...***fight the good fight...*** there it is a different Greek verb, it is the word 'strateuō'. We get our English word 'strategy' from that, and it means 'to wage war, to lead a campaign'. So Paul says at the beginning, "Lead the campaign. Wage the war. Wage the good war. War the good war," would be a better translation. And here at the end of Chapter 6, at the end of the letter he says, "Agōnizomai the agōn," that is, ***Fight the good fight...***

Now we are called to fight, but what I want to do in the time that we have this morning is consider this part of what it means to be a leader under three points. And that is, first of all, the man of God, what does he fight for? Secondly, what does he fight with? And thirdly, what does he fight against? *What does he fight for? What does he fight with? What does he fight against?*

1) What Does He Fight For?

When we look at the passage we see what he fights for. ***Fight the good fight of faith...*** He fights for his spiritual life. He fights for the faith. He fights to believe. We could really say, what the man of God fights for, what the Christian fights for is his very life spiritually. This is something that is somewhat, to be counterintuitive, at least in our day and age, with all the emphasis on just the light approach to the issue of eternal security. Listen, the Bible teaches eternal security. The Bible teaches that once you come to understand that you are a sinner, that you are hopeless apart from the grace of God, once you come to understand that Jesus Christ is God's provision for sin, that He is, God Himself come into human flesh. That He lived a perfect life, that He offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice, that in His death your sins were completely punished, that the wrath of God was exhausted in that. When you understand that Jesus Christ rose from the dead to prove that He was a righteous Savior, that He was God's Son, and when you place all of your trust in Him, at a moment in time, the reality, what the Bible teaches is you are saved, and you are saved forever. That is how a person is saved. We are not saved by works, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But one of the things that has hindered the church in recent decades is a misunderstanding of another balancing part of the Gospel message. The Bible is filled with antinomies, that is to teach us the eternal mind of God, God speaks to us from a human standpoint, in what appeared to be antinomies. An antinomy means

two things that appear to be contradictory which are not contradictory at all. They appear to be, but they are not.

For instance, the *Doctrine of the Trinity*. God is three, God is one. How can that be? To say He's three and He's one appears to be contradictory. No, He's three in person, and He's one in essence. That is an antinomy. The word of God is fully human and it is fully divine. That is, that every word in the Bible is written by a man, it came out of the mind of man, and it was written by a man. Yes, that is true, and it is also true that every single word, that whatever was written, 2 Timothy 3:16, is God-breathed. It was breathed out by God, that what came out on the paper, that what we have before us is the very word of God. It is the very word of God, it the very word of man, which is it? It is both. That is an antinomy. Our salvation is by the sovereign grace of God fully, the Bible teaches that, but it also teaches that we are responsible to repent and believe. Human responsibility is a part of it, and one of the things that we also see an antinomy in is this issue of eternal security. The Bible teaches the *Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints*. That is that once you truly come to believe you cannot be lost. This is made clear a number of places. John's Gospel, we've seen this a number of times in John 10:27-29. Listen to this, the reason your salvation is eternally secure is because of who holds you. Look what Jesus says.

John 10:27-28 ~ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

You are eternally secure because Jesus has you in His hand, and no one can snatch you out of His hand. Look what He goes on to say:

John 10:29 ~ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

He's saying that you are in Jesus' hand, and you are in the Father's hand, how can you be lost? Impossible! But the Bible also teaches that we are to persevere to the end, that we are to keep on believing. It teaches in a number of places. One place is Colossians 1:23. After Paul has celebrated the glory of our salvation in Christ, what Jesus has done for us, he's telling us in Verse 21, ***...you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds...*** "This is what you were before you were saved." But now you've been reconciled in Verse 22:

Colossians 1:22 ~ yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

“You’ve been reconciled to God and He is going to present you holy, and blameless, and beyond reproach.” He says, “Look at where you were, look at where you are going,” but then he says this, look at Verse 23.

Colossians 1:23 ~ if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard,...

If, this is true of you, *if* you continue. Now many people misunderstand this. They take this and run with one side of it without remembering Scripture interprets Scripture. God’s word doesn’t not contradict itself. This is an antinomy, it only appears to be a contradiction. Some people would go from this and say, “You can be saved, and then you can be lost.” That is not true because Jesus doesn’t lose anybody. In fact, in John 6, I believe it is 27, 6:39 actually, He says, “This is the Father’s will that all that He has given Me I will lose none.” Jesus is saying, “Look, I want to do the Father’s will, and this is His will that all that He gives Me, I will lose none.” You think Jesus is going to mess up? Impossible. But this antinomy still stands. He says, “If you continue in the faith, established and steadfast...” Now look at even the words ‘*established and steadfast*’. Do you see how that even pictures conflict? He is saying that to continue in the faith, you have to fight. You have to be firmly established and steadfast. Turn to Hebrews 3, Verses 12-14.

Hebrews 3:12-14 ~ Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

What he is saying, he is writing to a bunch of Christians, people who profess to be Christians. He is writing to Hebrew believers, and he is telling them the glory of our salvation, and he says, “Listen, I’m going to tell you all about what Jesus has done for you.” He has already told them in Chapter 2 and the beginning of Chapter 3. He’s going to show them in Chapter 4 how we have a perfect High Priest that enables us to go boldly to the throne of grace, not because of who we are, but

because of who He is. That He is able to save to the uttermost the one whose hope is in Him by virtue and indestructible life. And yet, here he has this refrain, a few times in this book, which is basically, it is true *if* you hold fast. If somebody is trying to take it away from you, you have to keep holding on to it. The idea is that faith holds on and keeps holding on, and the way that you put it all together is that true, saving faith keeps holding on to Christ. Faith itself is not a work, it is what Martin Luther said, it is the empty, outstretched hand of a beggar. It is reaching out to God, it is reaching out to Christ to give you what you cannot ever hope to have yourself. It is an empty hand. *Nothing in my hand I bring, only to the cross I cling.* It is the empty, outstretched hand of a beggar, but the idea is that the one who has truly been born again does not stop holding on to Christ.

Now the reason we don't stop holding on to Christ, and this is where the comfort comes, is because He is never going to let go of you. Think about your hand is in His hand, and God is saying in so many places, the antinomy is, "Don't let go of Jesus' hand." But the reality is, that sometimes you are going to feel weak, but He is never going to let go of you. But it still stands that God says that we're to live as if it were possible. This is actually, when you read the New Testament carefully, this is the mindset of the apostles. This is the biblical mindset, God's grace, and His salvation, it is everything of Christ. And in reality, faith is this, faith is learning to continually look away from myself and put everything in Jesus. When you feel like you are ready to fall away, what do you do? You look at Jesus! "Hold on to me, Lord Jesus." You tell Him. You confess, "I feel weak. I feel like I could fall," and you look to Him. That is what saving faith continues to do.

Now there are times where believers fall back. There are times where it can look like they are lost. What will tell the tale is whether they come back or not. That is why he says in Hebrews 3 today, speak to one another, encourage one another, reprove one another so that you won't be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. It is a fight. It is a life and death struggle, and what the man of God knows is that his own soul is part of what he is fighting for. This is what Paul tells us everywhere. He says:

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 ~ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things.

See the image? The Christian life is a contest, it's a race, it's a journey. It is a race that you've got to fight to get to the end of. Then he changes the metaphor to a fight.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 ~ Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I do not run as not without aim; I do not box as beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body...

He says, "I fight my body," and the word there used in 1 Corinthians 9:27, means 'to strike in the face, to strike right under the eye, to hit directly in the face'. He says, "I fight my own flesh. I am buffeting my body." ...***I buffet my body...*** Listen to this. This is the apostle Paul writing:

1 Corinthians 9:27 ~ ...I buffet my body, lest possibly after I have preached to others, I myself might be disqualified.

Did you hear the 'if'? He is saying, "Listen, it is a fight. Now, the fight is to hold on to Jesus. Trust nothing in yourself, and even when you feel the weakness, 'Jesus, help me. I feel weak. I feel that my grip is lessening.'" Keep looking to Him because what makes you hold on to Jesus is looking at how beautiful and wonderful Jesus Christ is.

I mean, the most wonderful thing in the world is to realize that when you feel, "I feel like I don't want to study my Bible right now," haven't you had that thought? "I'd rather check my email. I'd rather check the score." How many times do we do that? We do something else first when what we need to do is to want to be in the presence of Christ first. And conviction and guilt ought to be there. "What are we thinking?" But when you have that conviction and guilt, what you need to do is don't let Satan—Satan comes in right behind. The Spirit convicts us, our conscience convicts us, and then Satan comes in and starts accusing. He starts saying, "You're not really a Christian. Look at you! How could you want to do all these other things more than wanting to be with Christ?" What you do in those moments is start looking at Jesus.

One of the things that I've learned to do in those moments is say, "Lord, Heavenly Father, I come to You, and I'm thankful that Jesus Christ never wanted to do anything more than He wanted to be with You, that my Savior is so perfect in His humanity that every moment, that His meat and His drink was to do Your will, that what He wanted was to please You and to seek Your face. There was never anything that competed with His supreme loyalty to You, and that is the

righteousness in which I am standing, and that is what is not in my heart, but Lord Jesus, it's in You, and I want that. I'm looking to You to change that."

Even that process of thinking that way, you see it start to begin to well up in you, don't you? "I want Him more." It's always looking at Christ. It's always holding onto Christ—nothing in us, but everything in Him, and yet it is still a fight to do that. That's what Paul is saying. That's what the apostles are saying. It is a fight. It is a life and death, bloody battle to hold onto Jesus. I said Paul says:

1 Corinthians 9:27 ~ ...lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

He understood the tenuousness of that. I mentioned this fight, the good fight, is a fight for your soul. I think it's proven in the sense of when you see in 1 Timothy 6:12, ***Fight the good fight of faith;*** Then he says: ***take hold of eternal life...*** "Listen, fight the good fight of faith." You keep on fighting to believe. You keep on fighting to trust. You keep on fighting to look not at yourself, but only at Jesus. Keep fighting that way, and in doing that, you're able to heed the next command, which is to take hold of eternal life. And look what Paul says just a few pages over in his later letter to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:6.

2 Timothy 4:6 ~ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

He uses two images there. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course,..." And then he sums it up with, "I have kept the faith;" I think both of those two first clauses, ***fought the good fight*** and ***finished the course***, are saying the same thing as ***kept the faith***. I've fought the good fight of faith. I have finished the course. The wonderful book that we're studying John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* pictures the Christian life. The true Christian life is a journey, and it's not an easy walk in the park. It is an arduous journey, but the arduous journey is sustained by looking at Christ and the promises of God. You've got to finish the course. Bunyan wrote another book *The Holy War*, in which he pictures the Christian life as a battle, and Paul seems to be summing them both up right here in 2 Timothy 4, when he says:

2 Timothy 4:7 ~ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

So we fight for our very lives spiritually. We fight for the lives of those around us. We fight for the lives of those under us. The stakes are high. So what he fights for is he fights for his own soul, his eternal salvation, and the salvation of those under him and around him. What does he fight with? That's the second point.

2) What Does He Fight With?

We see this not directly in that passage, but we see it in the whole of the book, in fact, in all of the pastoral epistles. Remember the pastoral epistles were the epistles, the letters, that Paul wrote to pastors, pastoral letters, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. And one of the key words that Paul uses in these three letters is the word *sound*. You see it in 1 Timothy 1:10. He's talking about false teachers. He says:

1 Timothy 1:10 ~ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,...

Then in 1 Timothy 4:6, he speaks of sound doctrine which you have been following:

1 Timothy 4:6 ~ In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

1 Timothy 6:3 ~ If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words,...

2 Timothy 1:13 ~ Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

You can add 2 Timothy 4:3, Titus 1:9, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1, Titus 2:2, and Titus 2:8. All of those verses use the word *sound*. The adjective *sound* translates a Greek word which comes from the Greek verb ὑγιαίνω (hygiainō), which transliterates hygiene into English. The word ὑγιαίνω (hygiainō) means to be healthy, to promote life, and so what Paul is saying throughout 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus is, "Timothy and Titus, devote yourselves to teaching sound doctrine, to speaking sound words, to giving sound teaching." That is that the teaching of the word of God, the instruction in the word of God, the preaching in the word of God, the reading of the word of God, the application of the word of God, that is what gives

life, and so if you're fighting for your life, what you need is you need sound words, sound doctrine. The truth is the means by which we fight the fight of faith.

I mean, if you think about that, it just makes perfect sense with all that we see in the New Testament. I mean, where does faith come from? How do you grow in faith? Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. How do you get faith? You hear the word of Christ. How do you grow in faith? You continue to hear the word of Christ. You grow in your understanding of the word of Christ. You go to the word of God, and it's interesting in Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ, that the word translated *word*, as in *word of Christ*, is the word ῥῆμα (rhēma), which isn't the normal word *logos*, which would speak more of the whole, but it speaks of a particular word.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the particular spoken word. It's from the Scriptures, yes, but he's talking about not just a general term. He's saying the particular passage that you're looking at, that's what builds faith. It's being in the various passages of the Bible and studying them so that you come to understand what it's saying, and you hear that message, and that message is going to be the word of Christ.

Though it's the word of God, what's the message? The message of the whole word of God is the word of Christ. It's to give you a particular word, a particular revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. So when you go to the Bible, how you grow in faith is you go to the Bible, you study the word, and you look for Jesus. How does this point me to Christ?

Paul's saying that's how you fight the fight of faith. You fight with the word. It's a matter of life and death. I mean, if you're in a foxhole and you're fighting, one of the most important things that you're always aware of is how much ammunition do I have? Where's our communication so that we can call in artillery support? The word of God is the weapon that we use to fight. It's what gives us life. This is what Paul is telling Timothy earlier in the book in 1 Timothy 4:13, where he says:

1 Timothy 4:13 ~ Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

He's saying, "What I want you to be about, how are you going to fight the good fight of faith? How are you going to fight the fight of faith for your own soul and for the souls of those committed to you?"

1 Timothy 4:13 ~ Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. 14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. 15 Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things,...

Look at this:

...for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

The stakes are high, the battle is real, but the weapon that we have at our disposal is the word of Almighty God, so how can we fight without using the weapon that He's given us? How can we neglect such a great treasure? So the man of God knows what he's fighting for, he knows what he's fighting with, and then thirdly, what does he fight against?

3) What Does He Fight Against?

When we look at the context of these two exhortations to fight the good fight that we see in 1 Timothy 1:18 and 1 Timothy 6:12, one of the things that becomes clear is that the context in which Timothy is exhorted to fight—I mean, he's fighting for his soul, he's fighting for his life, but what is it that's going to keep you alive? What is it that's going to keep you holding onto Jesus? It's hearing more of the word and the message of who Jesus is. You must hear more and more. Every day, you must be filling your mind with who Christ is by reading the Book, by hearing the messages, by applying them to your life, by not just hearing it and letting it go, but by hearing it and going to Him and worshiping Him. "Lord Jesus, I want to have my life reflect what I've learned from Your word today."

So the urgency of sound doctrine is clear in the passage. But also what does he fight against? This is the flip side of this. Fight the good fight of faith, 6:12. This passage, it's interesting that 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus all deal in a very clear way with false teaching, and in fact, when you outline the book of 1 Timothy, what you see is that 1 Timothy 1, that chapter basically could be titled *Combating False Teaching*, and then you go on through instructions regarding men and women in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, we have instructions for overseers and deacons setting up leadership in the household of God. In Chapter 4 is some more instruction about false teaching, and then exhortation to Timothy to teach the word of God positively. Chapter 5 is instructions about widows and elders, and then Chapter 6 it comes back, and Chapter 6 would have the same title as Chapter 1: *Combat False Teaching*, because it comes back to talking about the false teachers again. And in that context as he's talking about false teaching, he says, "Fight the good fight," because part of fighting the good fight of faith, if so much is at stake, and if the key to winning the fight of faith and holding onto Jesus is the purity of doctrine, then the greatest enemy to holding onto Jesus is false teaching. You see this when you look at 1 Timothy 6:3. It starts into the flow that leads him to say, "Fight the good fight," in Verse 12.

1 Timothy 6:3 ~ If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,...

He goes on to talk about their motivation being monetary gain. In Chapter 1, the first thing Paul tells Timothy after he opens his letter, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus," Verse 2:

1 Timothy 1:2 ~ To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Look what he says:

1 Timothy 1:3 ~ As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

The first thing he says is, "I left you there and I want you to be sure that you instruct those people not to teach false doctrine in the church of God. He fights against false teaching. In fact, Paul, when he talks to Titus, he says he's to silence those. He's to shut them up. There are people teaching false things in the church. There are people teaching these myths of endless genealogies.

We don't know a whole lot about this false teaching they were dealing with, but it sounds like some kind of Jewish strange hermeneutical practice, where they were looking at the genealogies of the Old Testament and making something magical almost out of them, some clever, cunning way of looking at the Bible rather than the straight forward message of Scripture. The Greek word μῦθος (mythos) translates our word *myth*, human inventions. They look at the Bible and they're probably being allegorical, fanciful, in the way they interpret it.

One of the things that we see as we look at church history is that false teaching is always present. It has always been present. I mean, church history is a history basically of heresy. This group of heretics came up, and then this group of heretics came up, and what happens is it's popular heresy. It's really astounding if you stop and think about it. Isn't it amazing that when it was so hard to be a Christian in the Roman world—I mean, to become a Christian meant that you might have a death sentence. You very likely could encounter that kind of situation—that false teachers would spring up and deceive people and dominate the church. But it's the nature of Satan always to counterfeit, always to deceive.

You see it in the Old Testament all the way through, false prophets from the beginning, and one of the things Moses does when he gives the law, the first five books of the Bible before he dies, he gives Deuteronomy and he tells them in Deuteronomy 13 and 18, "Watch out for false prophets." What was Jesus' first sermon recorded in the New Testament? The extended sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, begins with the beatitudes. What does he end with? "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, wolves in sheep's clothing." There Jesus is, the Light of life, the truth is present among us, and He says, "Watch out for false prophets." As soon as the church is born, letter after letter, nine of Paul's thirteen letters, the occasion seems to be false teaching that caused him to write it. Of the other eight epistles, six are about false teaching.

In Acts, we hear Paul warning the Ephesian elders in his last address to them, weeping over them. Do you remember those words where he says to them with tears streaming down his face, "But some even among you will rise up speaking perverse things and lead astray many disciples" He sees ahead that there are going to be false teachers among the elders there in front of him, and so this is why it is so important for us to speak to call out false teaching, and in our day we have to be even as Paul was, even we have to be sometimes specific about it. He mentions people by name in 1 and 2 Timothy, Hymenaeus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:20.

Now we have the danger of false teaching that is there at your cell phone. Isn't that amazing? The technology, the benefits of it, you can listen to a sermon by John MacArthur, praise God, or you can listen to a sermon by any number of heretics, and there's something about the false teaching that always is most appealing to the fallen mind. We see this in what they were dealing with, the genealogies, worldly fables. When someone comes along speaking something that sounds new, watch out, a new way to find an understanding of who God is, watch out.

As leaders, as people who care about people's souls, we are to be willing to speak directly about that. You have to be wise when you're talking to somebody you don't know. Obviously you don't start off by saying, "What are you doing listening to that, reading that?" But the reality is if it's a matter of life and death, then anything that causes you to swerve from the pure doctrine is deadly. I remember hearing some time ago that rat poison is 93% cornmeal. It's the 7% that gets you. We live in a day like every day Satan has been from the very beginning propagating false teaching. He started in the garden and he has continued unrelentingly to the present day, and he will continue until Jesus comes back and finally destroys him. And so we must be ready to contend for the faith. We must love the truth and realize that it's all about seeing Jesus, and we are not to get so combative that we forget that the most important thing in my life and your life is not just fighting the false teaching. It's us loving Christ ourselves. But in doing that, we must have the word of God, and in doing that, we must ourselves resist false teaching, and we must in love speak to others about the danger of false teaching.

Paul used the metaphor, a couple of graphic metaphors, of the danger posed by false teaching, the danger of forgetting sound doctrine. He talks about the shipwreck of their faith in chapter 1. Hymenaeus and Alexander forgetting these things have made shipwreck of their faith. 2 Timothy 3 speaks about false teaching being gangrene, spreading rapidly like gangrene. Well, gangrene has to be dealt with severely. I forget the young lady's name—you remember a few years ago the young lady that had the accident, fell in the river, and then she ended up losing multiple limbs. She seemed to have a really amazing mindset. I felt like she must be a believer the way she handled it. She lost like maybe both arms, one leg. I can't remember. It was pretty profound. Now imagine if you went to the doctor and you said, "Doctor, I've got a little problem here. I have a mole that looks funny here, and I've got something on my foot," and you come out and your arm is cut off and your foot is cut off at the leg. What would you say? "That's a bad doctor. What did you do?"

If it's gangrene or if it's that kind of MRSA or whatever it was that young lady had, it took something radical to save her life, and they had to cut off her limbs to save her life. And there's a sense in which false teaching is like that. When it distracts us from Christ, when it distracts us from the word of God, the pure, unadulterated doctrine of truth, then it must be treated that way. Paul says to Titus in Chapter 1, Verse 13, "Reprove them severely so that they may be sound in faith." He's talking about reprove the false teachers. Reprove them severely, because of the deceptiveness of false doctrine, because of the stakes. It's life and death. It's eternal life and eternal death. So we have to love people. We can't start off that way. We can't just start a conversation, as I said, "What are you doing??" I mean, I find myself thinking that. I've been places where I've been surprised to see what people are reading, sound churches or book stores, and you go in and you see all of the different things that are some measure of rat poison, and you just want to say, "Can I take these books out of your way, just take all of these books?" But that's not the answer.

The answer is for us to love Christ so much, to love His word so much, and to be able to say, "Listen, there is a better way. There's a better way to hear Jesus calling than that foolish book. The way you hear Jesus calling is you go to the Bible and you read the Bible, and you try to find Christ as you read the Scriptures, and He will speak to you. You listen to Him, but you don't listen to Him in a vacuum. You listen to Him in the pages of Scripture, and then you come to love Him and treasure Him. The man of God is known by what he flees from, what he follows after, and what he is willing to fight for.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, we thank You for the truth, the purity of the word of God. We acknowledge our own weakness and our inability to understand and apply these things as we ought. We acknowledge our complete dependence upon You, but we pray that You would help us be people who see the seriousness of the Christian life, that we might live soberly and vigilantly, that we might realize that it is a war and that we are to soldier on trusting in the Captain of our salvation. Help us be faithful to the end. We pray for those that are here today who need to be born again that You would grant them the grace of life, that You would help them to look at Christ to give them repentance and faith, that they might today repent and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and we pray this in His marvelous Name, Amen.

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.