

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 7.16.2023

PART 19 - FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH

I. INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy 6:11-21

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. **12** Fight the good fight of the faith. 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. **13** I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, **14** to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **16** 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. Amen.

17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. **18** They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, **19** thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

20 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” **21** for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

Grace be with you.

II. FINAL DIRECTIVES

- But as for you, O man of God...”
- Paul is drawing a distinction between Timothy and the false teachers who were using godliness as a means of gain.
- There are a few examples of people called “a man of God” in the OT. Moses (Deut 33:1; Josh 14:6), Samuel (1 Sam 9:6), David (Neh 12:24), and both Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:24; 2 Kings 4:7,9).
- The man of God was God’s servant, representative, and spokesperson.
- What a high honor for Timothy to be designated as they were, a “man of God.”

- Two reasons Paul may have used that designation:
- First, to get Timothy's attention for the weighty instructions that were to follow.
- Second, to ground Timothy in the truth of who he truly is in Christ.
- In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul will write to Timothy regarding the purpose of the ministry of God's Word, it is to make the man of God complete and equipped for every good work.
- A title that was before only given to the OT heroes of the faith, Paul now places on Timothy.

FIVE DIRECTIVES GIVEN TO TIMOTHY

1. FLEE

V11a But as for you, O man of God, flee these things.

- What things is he to run away from? Everything that characterized false teachers.
- In his second letter, he writes for Timothy to "flee youthful passions" (2 Tim 2:22).
- This is an important spiritual strategy in our battle against sin.
- Flee is the negative command in how to deal with sin.
- It's common sense that we should run from danger and things that threaten us.
- Sadly, we also run to things that cause us spiritual harm.
- But this is the best strategy for dealing with temptation.
- One of the greatest examples of what it looks like to flee temptation is in the story of the patriarch Joseph (Gen. 39:12).
- The reason many still struggle with a besetting sin is because they try to reason with their sin, justify their sin, instead of turning their back on sin and running as fast as their legs will carry them from it.
- What temptation to sin do you need to flee from?

2. PURSUE

11b Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

- This is the positive side of the previous command to flee.
- In short, flee evil and pursue good.
- 2 Tim 2:22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
- You see both the positive and negative commands. Flee and Pursue!
- The six spiritual qualities mentioned are poetic summaries of the good a Christian is to pursue, they are not an exhaustive list of the things we are to pursue but representative of the virtues that a believer follows after.
- When you think about how a Christian grows in godliness, these two commands are indicative of how that happens.
- The process of sanctification involves simultaneously leaving sin behind, while reaching forward to what is good and godly.
- Many of us get really hung up on our sanctification because all we do is focus on our sin.
- The problem with that one sided approach is that it leads to legalism.
- But fleeing sin is only one side of the equation of sanctification.
- We run from sin but run to something else.
- We have to pursue godliness and righteousness because that is the only way we will stop obsessing with our sin and focusing on what Christ has accomplished for us.
- Christ's victory over sin secures our victory over sin.

- Paul tells us that was his strategy.
- Philippians 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.
- The goal is to know Christ more! Forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.
- We have to engage in both fleeing and pursuing.
- John Stott, *"We are simply to run from evil as we run from danger, and to run after goodness we we run after success."*

3. FIGHT

12a Fight the good fight of the faith.

- The Christian life is not all flight, it also involves fight; not just running but also standing.
- Timothy was charged with waging a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:18-19).
- 2 Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
- Paul employs these military and athletic metaphors to describe the intensity of the spiritual warfare in the Christian life and the fight for THE faith and the strenuous effort involved in that warfare.
- Some have swerved from the faith, some have wandered from the truth, but Timothy is to stand and fight for the faith.
- The very last instruction and command given to Timothy is to "guard the deposit" that was entrusted to him.
- Look at all the ways Timothy has been instructed in this letter:
 - Confront and stop those who are teaching a different doctrine (1:3)
 - Wage the good warfare holding to the faith and a good conscience (1:18-19)
 - Appoint elders who can faithfully teach the Word of God (3:2)
 - Devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching (4:13)
 - Keep watch on himself and his teaching (4:16)
 - And here in our passage to fight the good fight and keep the commandment unstained (6:12,14)
- The fight for the faith, the truth, is a good fight.
- The faith has been under attack in every age as it presently is in ours.
- The call to fight for the faith is one you and I need to respond to.
- Jude 3, 4 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 who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.
- This is a general letter to the church. All are to "contend for the faith."
- The word "contend" comes from the same root word in the Greek as the word "fight" in our passage. It is a word used to describe the struggle and striving of someone engaged in an athletic contest. It is the word from which we get our English word, agonize.
- Paul and Jude are saying the same thing. Fight the good fight of the faith!

- Kent Hughes, *“Our generation must contend for the faith. We must not be contentious, but we must fight for the apostolic faith. Doctrine is all-important because it determines the course of our lives. The truth of the gospel is everything—it is the difference between life and death. We must withstand false teachers. We must think clearly as we define our theology. We must never compromise the truth.”*

- The spiritual warfare is intense.
- Fighting involves remaining in the truth, not wandering from it yourself and standing firm for the truth.
- Everyday you and I are tempted in some way to let go of the gospel. To abandon truth.
- Don’t compromise. Stand firm in the faith.

4. TAKE HOLD

12b 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.

- How do you take hold of eternal life?
- Paul is grounding all of these commands not in Timothy’s own efforts of fighting sin, pursuing godliness, and fighting the good fight of the faith but in the righteousness and eternal life already given him by Christ.
- Paul is instructing him to live the life he has already been given—eternal life.
- What is eternal life?
- John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

- The emphasis here is not on the duration of eternal life but on its quality.
- Do we have eternal life now or later? Yes!
- It is both a present possession and a future hope.
- Yet we struggle on a daily basis to experience the fullness and richness of this life.
- It is a daily battle to walk in the joy and freedom of eternal life.

- The verb translated “take hold” means to grasp or seize, sometimes with violence. Examples: Jesus rescues Peter (Matt. 14:31) and Paul seized by the crowd (Acts 21:30).
- Paul is instructing Timothy, who already had eternal life, to seize it and to make it completely his own.
- And we have to do the same thing.
- We can run this race, seizing eternal life now, because the outcome has been secured for us by Christ.
- He has already done this for us, this life is ours now and more fully and completely possessed at his return.

- Paul encourages Timothy to take hold of the eternal life by reminding him of some key things:
- He has been called to this—He is God’s child. That calling secured his rightful place in God’s family and granted him eternal life.
- He has confessed the faith—Timothy made a public confession of his faith. Probably as demonstrated in his baptism.
- Life and ministry are tough and challenging. Just like Timothy, we need a fresh reminder of God’s grace, the eternal life to which we have been called to, and the stand we took in our public confession in baptism, so that we can walk faithfully in the eternal life that has been granted us.
- Live out your life in view of Christ’s work on our behalf and on his faithfulness.

a. A WORD TO THE RICH

- Paul gives some instructions to the rich in v17-19
- This exhortation provides a tangible example for believers who are rich to take hold of eternal life.
- Timothy is to charge them not to become puffed up because of their wealth.
- They are not to trust in their riches because they are temporary.
- They are to set their hope on God who is the provider of the good things they can enjoy.
- They are to be generous. God gave them riches to be a blessing to others.
- As a result they will store up treasures for themselves in heaven, as a good foundation for the future.
- Here is the link to Paul's directives to Timothy— v19b so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.
- If they do these things, they will be seizing eternal life now and enjoying it to the fullest.
- The rich are to live for eternal gain and they are to give for eternal life.

5. KEEP

13-14 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, 14 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time

- The last command comes by way of a very strong charge.
- He states this charge by appealing to two undeniable witnesses, God the Father and Christ Jesus.
- “In the presence of God...and of Christ Jesus...”
- Paul lived his life in the conscious awareness of God's presence.
- 'Coram Deo,' a Latin phrase meaning, “before the face of God.”
- We live our entire life before the presence of God.
- We must live our lives with this continual awareness.

- The God who sees all, knows all, and whose presence fills the universe, is called upon as a witness to this charge to Timothy—to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach.
- Now was not meant to intimidate Timothy but to exhort him. God who gives life, will sustain him. And Jesus as the faithful witness is called upon as the example for Timothy to follow (John 18:33-37).
- Jesus had already done what Paul was asking Timothy to do!

- What is the commandment he is being asked to keep?
- It would include every single one of the admonitions Paul wrote to him.
- Everything concerning the discharge of his life, calling, and ministry was to be kept.
- How long was he to keep this up? Until Christ's return.
- When will Christ return? At the proper time.
- Be faithful until then!

CONCLUSION

- Paul breaks out in a spontaneous doxological moment. Here is the guarantee of Timothy's success in what he has been charged with.
- —he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 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. Amen.

- We need to be continually reminded of who our God is!
- These five directives remind us of not just what spiritual leaders, pastors and elders are called to, but what each and every believer is called to.
- We are called to remain faithful in life and ministry until Christ returns.
- And while all of these may seem impossible and overwhelming because every day you feel beat up spiritually, Paul's final words are good news.
- "Grace be with you."
- How do we fight sin, pursue godliness, fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life, and be faithful to keep all that has been commanded us?
- Through the grace of our Lord.
- Timothy could not do this on his own or in his own strength, and neither can we.
- For those who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, who have placed your faith in the hope of the gospel, who have made the good confession, there is great encouragement for you.
- We do not fight this war FOR victory but FROM victory!

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?