“The Good Fight of Faith”

1 Timothy 6:11-21

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Introduction:

I find it wonderful that this lesson comes at the time the world stage is focused on the Olympics and the contests that are taking place there. It really gives us a visual of what it takes to win in these serious competitions.

In case you didn’t know, we are in a competition. The world, as God originally designed it, was good. But, through the course of time, as evil entered the world, this place that we call our physical home, has become a contentious place. It has become a battleground where a spiritual war is being waged each day. The target of the main attacks is our faith.

If you ever heard someone use the phrase, “The struggle is real,” you get the sense that what they are involved in at that moment or what they are dealing with is extremely hard. The way they are trying to go or the thing they are trying to accomplish at that time is not easy; rather, it comes with the press of extra effort to get done what they need to get done to make it through.

No truer is this than in the adherence to and the push to maintain our Christian faith. In a world bent on opposing us with its lack of values and moral character, and with spiritual enemies all around, we are in a fight to keep firm in what we believe.
But, keep firm we must. We are called to be proactive in protecting and walking in our faith. We must be diligent in our obedience to God as we hold on to our confession and confidence in the One who brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

What God has given us through Jesus Christ is too good to let go and the reward up ahead is greater than any medal one gets on the podium; it’s eternal. We must strive in not letting the flow of this world influence us or make us waver in our faith.

Today’s lesson is a bold message for us to hold on to what we believe. To fight the good fight of faith and never let go!

1 Timothy 6:11 “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”

In the verses leading up to today’s lesson, Paul, in his letter to Timothy, encourages him in his role as pastor of the church of Ephesus. In this role of leadership, Timothy would be responsible for how things are ordered or conducted in the church. As one to whom others would look up to, spiritual discipline would be of the highest order because it not only testifies of the leader before the congregation, but it teaches the congregation how to act before the world. All with the end purpose of drawing more people to believe in Jesus Christ through their living testimonies.

In chapter 6 particularly, some of the issues Paul points out for teaching edification revolves around contentment, erroneous teaching and beliefs, and the warning of the love of money and how it has caused some to “err from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10). For these, Paul wants Timothy to be on guard from these practices in protecting his faith.

“But thou, O man of God.” Let’s pause here for a moment and pay attention to that word “but.” In contrast to what Paul has already described as the wrong way some are following, the word “but” serves as a sifting agent for the one whose identity is tied up in God. In baking, sifting is used to separate, and as a “man of God,” Timothy particularly had to make sure his actions were separated from the
things that would dim his testimony before the world instead of edifying the God he served. In other words, he was saying, “Timothy, you are different, and I want you to act differently, talk differently and walk differently in the pursuit your faith. Don’t do what they are doing but let your testimony before God and the world be of the truer stuff.” For that to happen, Paul lays out some specifics for Timothy, and those in Christ, to follow.

“Flee these things.” Disassociate yourself from the wrongdoings of others. The word “flee” gives great urgency to get away from there. High tail it out of there like never before. Do not give an opportunity for the seed of evil that comes from hanging around that stuff to have a chance to plant in you. In other words, “RUN!”

The effects of hanging around these sinful behaviors or pondering them in one’s heart, if continually being exposed to it, can ravage the faith of a believer. If you touch fire, you’re going to get burned. The best way to avoid getting burned is don’t expose yourself to the fire in the first place. Many don’t realize it but to fight the good fight of faith means getting away from stuff that can cripple our walk with the Lord.

While Timothy is to turn away from those things that can be damaging to one’s faith, Paul counterbalances his teachings for the things Timothy should actually be seeking after because what one is turning to is just as important as what one is turning away from.

Timothy, and every Christian’s life, will be characterized by what they “follow after;” by the things they pursue. Rather than going after the things others are going after like money and materialistic things that those in the world are looking for, Paul teaches Timothy and us what are the better things to seek in our lives.

With that, he makes this list of things to pursue: “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness,” all designed to govern our relationship with God and with each other. They not only show the inner commitment we are to have toward God in the right things we pursue, keeping His ways as a priority in all that we do in our lives, to believe in them and adhered to them through it all, but they
also show us how to respond to circumstances and people through the production of the fruit of the Spirit (see “Spirit-Led, Holy Living” for more information from Word For Life Says).

1 Timothy 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

So, Paul teaches, “Fight the good fight of faith.” Fighting the good fight of faith is not about putting your dukes up. It’s all about putting your faith up. It’s more about taking a stand than taking a punch. It’s ordering one’s life and steps according to the will of God for our lives (Psalms 119:133). It’s running the race of this Christian life; it’s competing in the spiritual Olympics, pushing toward the finish line with every ounce of effort one possesses because there is a wonderful goal up ahead.

While we are pushing forth in the defense and protection and adherence to what we believe, we are doing so with the intent of laying hold of a prize. Our prize is the “eternal life” we are living in hopes of. At the end of any contest, at the end of the struggle, there is something we are looking forward to. Our stand through all we are facing here is in light of the victory we are promised to gain in the end: “eternal life.”

Heaven belongs to the believers. Life eternal is the ultimate prize for the one who refuses to give in or give up; to the one who doesn’t get entangled by the things of this world others are pursuing (compare 2 Timothy 2:4). That’s why Jesus once taught, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life...” (John 6:27). We have something better than money, we have something better than the materialistic things and social status’ down here to lay hold of.

Our purpose in being “called” and of having this “profession” (confession) of faith, is to pursue the things of God. To be God-focused and heaven-focused, not world-focused and getting caught up in the things we presently see. It’s pushing past every contention here while keeping an upward focus for our future.
1 Timothy 6:13 “I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;”

Therefore, in the strongest terms, Paul tells Timothy, “I give thee charge in the sight of God.” If you have ever attended a graduation you may hear the word “charge” being used during the occasion when the higher-ups of the learning institution instruct the graduating class on how to apply their new found knowledge with responsibility. This is a word that Paul has chosen to use several times in his letter to Timothy to invoke the seriousness of all he is relaying to him.

And, to punctuate his statement even more with importance, he is delivering this message before the same sovereign and supreme God of all the universe that breathes life into every being (“quickeneth”) and the “Christ Jesus” who stood blameless with His “good confession” before “Pontius Pilate”, never wavering, never backing down.

1 Timothy 6:14 “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:”

With that, Paul continues to encourage Timothy to “keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable.” Continue forth in the press of your faith; continue to live a life above reproach and accusation. When Jesus comes back at His “appearing” (second coming), He’s coming back for a church “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” (Ephesians 5:27).

Yes, that might not meld well with the current culture of the world, but in Christ, we are not living to please the culture of this world; rather, we are living for a higher life and that requires the discipline of maintaining and keeping the faith without fail against all adversaries, including the flesh. We who are called by His name are called to live like Him. “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked,” (1 John 2:6, see also 1 Peter 1:13-25; Matthew 5:48). Our faith is on display as an example of the Christ we follow.
1 Timothy 6:15-16 “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

For when He comes “in his times,” all will see Him as He truly is. We don’t know the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36), but Peter teaches us, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...” (2 Peter 3:10).

Once, I wrote:

“Preoccupation with this world has so many in its clutches and has lulled multitudes into a false sense of security. How many of our waking hours are spent on the temporary trappings of now instead of the glory that awaits our future? Our time on this earthly sojourn is not infinite. Time will pass. Days will turn to night and eventually, at our proper time, we will step into eternity or as the older folk used to say, when Jesus cracks the sky – it will all be over.

Will we be ready or caught unawares?” (I Come Quickly/Word For Life Says)

Paul wants Timothy, and every Christian, to be aware of not only the life they are living, but the times they are living in, and the time they are living for. Be ready.

Know that is God is the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,” meaning He is Supreme Sovereign over all (Revelation 19:6). The Lord reigns, the Bible tells us (Psalms 93:1; 97:1; 99:1)! He is “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple,” (Isaiah 66:1). He is God alone!

We see a similar title also applied to Christ (Revelation 17:14; 19:16) and the Bible encourages us He has all power and authority (compare Colossians 2:10) and that we can take heart because our faith is complete in Him! We are told, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” (Phil. 2:10-11). He will be acknowledged as
King forever. The everlasting King will rule forever, and all will “bow the knee” in honor and recognition of who He really is!

God “haft immortality” meaning He is never subject to death as others are. “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,” (Psalm 90:2). As God in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16; see also John 1:14, 1 John 1:2), Jesus Christ is conqueror over death. 2 Timothy 1:10 tells us, “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Life everlasting is found in Christ who lives forever (see Hebrews 7:24). Hold on to your faith that you may live eternally with Him!

God is He who is that “light which no man can approach unto.” The Bible reminds us with the story of Moses asking to see God’s face, His glory, just how impossible this was (read Exodus 33:18-20). Christ is where God is in that glorious place and it is God’s glory that illuminates all of heaven (see Revelation 21:23). It is a place too wonderful for man to obtain on his/her own; whom without Christ, we would not be admitted into the presence of God. Keep fighting the good fight of faith that you may be able to enter in to be with Him “whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

1 Timothy 6:17-19 “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.” In light of all of this, teach people what is the greater gain, Timothy! Wealth, notoriety, social status, and the things the world applauds are not what really counts. They are fleeting and will pass away. “For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?” (Proverbs 27:24). Nothing we accumulate here will last forever. Therefore, don’t put your trust in
things but put your trust in the God “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;” who gave you those things in the first place.

And, when He blesses, use those blessings, not just for yourself, but turn them into “good works” by sharing and impacting the lives of others in a positive way. Part of fighting the good fight of faith is using what we have to lift others up and offer help and support when and where it is needed; not be self-focused, but others-focused (see “Faith Disciples” Sunday School Lesson for more information).

This, in turn, benefits us spiritually as well in the long run. For we are “laying up in store... a good foundation against the time to come.” With “eternal life” ever-present in the mind of the believer, that one lives with not only their own life of faith in their hearts but with the concern of others there as well. What we do in the here and now impacts our future to come.

1 Timothy 6:20-21 “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.”

Therefore, Timothy, “Keep that which is committed to thy trust.” All that Paul is teaching Timothy, all that entails this life of faith, Timothy is to fight for it and guard against anything contaminating it such as “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.” There was a lot of talk with a lot of false teaching that Timothy was to guard himself and guard the faith against. Everything that sounds good is not good. Timothy, hold on to the truth and fight to stand in it!

Even though some “professing have erred concerning the faith,” meaning having been drawn away into believing what is false, you Timothy, continue in the good fight of faith.

The world today is full of false teachings that may sound right, but if it doesn’t match up with the Word of God in its entirety, it is false, and we would do good to stay away from it, too.
Conclusion:

As the competitors on the world stage of the Olympics press forth for their wins in the competitions they are in, may we be all the more diligent in our press for our faith. The prize we are seeking after will not tarnish or fade with time but will last into eternity. May we fight the good fight of faith that we may gain that greater reward.