

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“The Good Fight of Faith”

1 Timothy 6:11-16

We are in 1 Timothy 6:11-16, so if you would turn there, our topic this morning will be the good fight of faith. I'll read it in the New American Standard. "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."

This is our passage this morning, and it's divided up into three sections. Verse 10, part of verse 11, and the first half of verse 12 deal with the means of the good fight of faith. This is how we go about fighting the good fight of faith. The good fight of faith is essentially living a godly Christian life, living as God would have us to live, and in order to do this we need faith. The Christian life, as it's no walk in the park, requires a determination and a fight. This section here speaks to how we fight the good fight of faith, the means that we go about living the godly life that God would have us to live. And as we see, this term "fight" might not be what some people think about when they think of living the Christian life, but it is indeed a battle, a daily battle, to live as God would have us to.

This term "fight" was used commonly for athletic events, in terms of competition, and in our society think of what figure most embodies the good fight. Who would come to your mind? Different people have come to my mind, and there is one person that stands out more than anyone else, Rocky Balboa. Maybe you remember him this way, being sort of like you and me, pretty average, not that skilled, but having great determination. This was maybe why we identified with him in that movie from almost 30 years ago. We saw someone who had a heart bigger than their skill and a goal, not so much to win, but just to hang in there.

This is the Christian life. We know that we will have victory and that the Lord will deliver us to godliness and perfection in heaven. But in the mean time, as each day goes by, we hang in there and fight the good fight of faith. Some days we are knocked down, and we get up again to fight again the next day. How do we go about this effectively? Verse 11 speaks of fleeing. Now there is some training involved. We all recall Rocky running through the streets of Philadelphia and up the steps, but in order to train he needed to stop doing some things and start doing some other things. And like him, if you are going to fight the good fight of faith and follow the Lord Jesus, this is going to require starting to do some things and stopping doing some other things to change yourself. So, as we look at verse 11 we see this phrase "but flee from these things, you man of God."

What are "these things" that we are to stop doing, to avoid, to flee, to get away from? Well, if you recall from the context, "these things" are riches. Verses 9-10, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction."

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

This is the desire for the world's things and viewing money as being a means to acquire the things of the world, or significance or protection for one's self. All of those sorts of things are really misplaced values and we should flee from the things that money and the love of money could get us, because really it's not as significant as the world says it is.

Don't consider these things that valuable. Don't pursue those things, but rather pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. We need to flee the love of riches. As Rocky needed to put aside certain foods from his diet and start drinking eggs out of a cup, so we should turn away from the things that are detrimental to following the Lord and the things that the world says is so important and follow a life of righteousness and godliness. Righteousness being the outward obedience of faith and godliness being internal character that allows us to live a righteous life, acting in a godly manner.

Faith, trust in the Lord, love, expressing that love toward God and others in a caring manner, perseverance, endurance, fighting the good fight of faith, and finally gentleness, expressing love to people around us in a kind and gentle manner, this is what we are to follow.

And we need one more thing if we are going to do that and that's from verse 12. "Take hold of the eternal life." Take hold, grip it, grasp it, is what the word means. We need a firm and lasting resolve. Rocky was not going to last, go the distance with Apollo Creed if he in his preparation thought, "gee, it would be nice to go 15 rounds, I hope that happens." No, he needed a firm and lasting resolve to carry him through the kind of training to prepare himself. He was determined and we need that. We need a commitment, a decision, resolve.

When I was growing up I had a beagle; his name was Frisky. I had two, but one was rather overweight, and he loved to eat and one of the things he loved was when my mother would cook and throw him a bone. Typically my mom liked to cook lamb, and so every once in awhile he would get a bone and he would grip it like nothing could stop him. So much that when he got distracted after gnawing on the thing for hours, he would look up and he would stick his paw on top of that bone just to make sure that no one snuck it away from him. He had a resolve to keep that bone.

So, we need a resolve to take hold of eternal life, that life that has been stored up for us, and we are going to hang in there in spite of being knocked down. We are going to struggle to live a godly life. We are going to get back up again and continue onward in the fight of faith. So, in order to put ourselves in a position to do this, to not just hope that this just comes about, we must plan.

Just as Rocky hit the streets in a disciplined manner everyday and trained, we need a plan. A plan to know what God says, not just hope that we get this in our mind, but to develop a way of inculcating what God has to say as a part of our lives and as a part of our value system. We need to have Him communicating with us on a regular basis and us communicating with Him and on regular basis. I can't give you that plan because each one of you is different, but you can learn what works best for you to embody Christ's words in your being so that you can be in a position to follow Him.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

You can put yourself in a position with other godly people to fellowship, to have real fellowship, not just kind words to one another but something that keeps us motivated and accountable. Put yourself in that position so you can be around the people that will encourage you, and you can encourage them. Put yourself in a position to be able to explain about the Lord to people who don't know Him. These things just don't happen because we would like them to, we actually need to think about it and figure out how to position ourselves so that we can accomplish what God would have us to. The means of a good fight of faith are fleeing the love of riches, following a life of righteousness with a firm and lasting resolve, a commitment.

Now, it's one thing to tell you this but you also need to be motivated to do this, to put this into practice. So, there are some verses here that the Lord is instructing us with that will hopefully highlight for you the importance. So, the next section, verses 12 to 14, is our motivation for the good fight of faith. This section speaks of why we fight the good fight. Why you should set your course with a firm and lasting resolve to flee the things that the world sees as being valuable and follow the things that the Lord sees as being valuable.

And we start out with our calling. "Take [grasp] hold of the eternal life to which you were called." This is a concept that keeps coming up again and again and again in the Scriptures. We were called to the good fight of faith. In other words, knowing how we entered the fight of faith helps us to endure the fight of faith. If we understand that we did not get into this Christian life because we chose to do it for a while, but that really the Lord Himself has called us to this. This becomes compelling and moves us to know that He has selected us, He has called us, He has appointed us to this task. So, we can carry on because this is God's will.

For most of you, just turn the page and you will find 2 Timothy 1:8-9 which says, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord [Don't shrink away from following the Lord], or of me His prisoner [Paul speaking]; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, (9) who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." We can endure because God has granted to us the place of fighting the good fight of faith. If He's put us, called us, compelled us into this fight, He has given us the resources to endure in the fight and we can pick ourselves up and move forward.

Next is our confession. "To which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Timothy, certainly, at some point, most likely often in the presence of others, spoke about his faith in the Lord. Most likely this is his baptism but more than that, in the presence of many witnesses, he identified himself as a follower of Christ. And so should we. I hope that is true for each of you that you have identified yourself as a follower of Christ, that the people who know you, know that you are a Christian. As you do that in the presence of many witnesses there are some benefits that happen. The more we acknowledge our faith the more accountable we are to our faith. The more we publicly identify ourselves as followers of Christ the more it compels us to maintain that profession and not shrink away.

The book of Hebrews is really written a lot about the shrinking away from faith and how to not do that. Hebrews 10:23-25 helps us with this concept.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

You are probably familiar with verses 24 and 25 that speak of fellowship, but in the context of verse 23 it shows us a little more. Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering [Let us not just confess the truth of Christ, but hold fast to it and not waver away from it], for He who promised is faithful [He will bring it about]; (24) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (25) not forsaking the assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

So by stimulating, encouraging, and not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, we are coming together so that we can be unwavering in our confession. We can endure in our confession of faith and not shrink back. The more we acknowledge our faith the more accountable we are to it and the better we will be able to persevere. This is why it is good to position yourself with people around you who can bring that kind of stimulation, that kind of encouragement, and you can do to them so that you will not be wavering but be steadfast, fighting the good fight of faith.

Next is our charge. Back to 1 Timothy 6:13. Paul writes, "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." This charge was in verse 14, "that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This charge of keeping the commandment is really all encompassing. The commandment is covering truly all of what he has written. If you recall the greatest commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself," you will see that all of what Paul has written to Timothy is fulfilling those commandments. So, in every thing he has written, he is encouraging, he is charging.

In fact, this is a command just like the words prior to this were commands. Flee is a command; it's imperative. Follow is a command; it's imperative. Take hold is a command; it's imperative. And now he is charging Timothy to keep the commandment in purity without stain or reproach. This charge is given with certain information. In the presence of God he is charging Timothy. We live in God's presence, Timothy lives in God's presence, and when you are in God's presence, as you always are, that should put you on alert.

Have you ever had your boss come in while you were working? It kind of makes you perk up a little bit and think "well, am I doing what I am suppose to be doing?" Or you are driving down the road and you are going 10 miles an hour and you see a police car and you slow down to 7 miles an hour just in case, because these people have some authority. God has even more authority and we are always in God's presence. Being in God's presence, knowing we are in God's presence helps us to mind our p's and q's and to take the charge seriously. We live in God's presence.

We not only live in God's presence but we live because of God's power. I charge you in the presence of God. God, who gives life to all things, is with us, we must be on the alert, be attentive. We live because God has allowed us to live. He has given life to you, He has given life to me, He has given life to all things today and, if He so chooses, tomorrow and the next day. Colossians 1 says He holds all things together by the word of His power. The things of the world are being held together and being given life because of God. So, this gives a sense of reverence of our dependence upon God.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Knowing our dependence upon God helps our determination to fight the good fight of faith. James 4 tells us how fleeting our life is. James 4:14 says, "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." So, we must not think that we are having life in ourselves. We have to recognize the dependence we have on God who gives life. That helps us to be determined, knowing God is with us, His presence is with us, and He has given life to us for this very day and even into eternity. God gives life to all things. That's our charge; and our charge is moved by knowing that God is with us and has enabled us to live, to keep the commandment with out stain.

Our next thing to motivate us is Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate. The example or the case study we have been given of Christ Jesus before Pontius Pilate should also motivate us and move us to fight the good fight of faith as Jesus did. In John chapters 18 and 19 is the most information the Scripture gives us about what Jesus said before Pilate is given to us.

In John 18:33, He is before Pilate and here is Jesus' confession that's referenced. "Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?' Now He knows that Pilate has been set up here and others are bringing this information to him. "Pilate answered, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.' Pilate therefore said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'"

And later, the last conversation between Pilate and Jesus is in 19:10-11 "Pilate therefore said to Him, 'You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?' Jesus answered, 'You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin.'"

When Jesus addressed Pilate, when He confessed to Pilate, the thing that stands out in His confession is that His confession before Pilate focused on Himself and who He was. When we confess Christ, our confession should focus upon who He is. I know there is a place for the testimony of faith to be this is what God has done for me and that's good, but you know other people can say that too or attempt to say that too and who can really argue with the whole thing. There are people of other religions or in some cults that will say God did this to me, God said that to me, and who's to argue with personal experience.

But our confession isn't so much this is what God did for me, but this is who God is, this is who Jesus is, and Jesus' confession focused on Himself, who He was, what He came to do, His mission. His kingdom was not of this realm. His kingdom is of another realm and He's busy about delivering people to that kingdom. He is a king; He is the King of the Jews. This is what He came into the world to be, as the Messiah, to deliver people from their sin and that's the truth. He is the truth and whatever people say that truth is not changing.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

And finally, chapter 19 speaks to His might. Whatever authority or power anybody has, has been given to them, granted to them by God, and He could trump it at any point, and Jesus could overcome Pilate at that point, but He willingly chose not to because He had a greater purpose. His kingdom was not of this world. That's our case study.

In 1 Peter we find an example of Jesus encouraging us in fighting the good fight of faith, and here are the words from 1 Peter 2:21 that speaks to the example that has been given to us. "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; for by His wounds you were healed."

The Lord gives us an example, when He was being crucified, when He was suffering. This is what we should follow. He is our example and if He chose to do it willingly, so should we. When we are being reviled, when we are being tempted to shrink back from it, we should be not reviling in return. We should entrust ourselves. This is where faith comes in. We should entrust ourselves to the one who judges righteously, knowing God has the power and God has the love to bring about what He desires, and we can have faith, and we can fight the good fight of faith.

Also helping us in the good fight of faith is the consummation, the appearing of our Lord. That's the end of things for us. We will be delivered at the appearing of the Lord. When the Lord appears to take us to Himself, we will be delivered from this fight of sin. He will bring it about at the proper time. There are a couple of things that are very prominent in the Lord's return. One is that it's eminent. It can happen at any moment. This is what the word "appearing" even denotes. It appears, it's eminent, it could happen at any moment, and we look forward to that. And His return is unknown. We don't know when that will be. Some people think they know when that will be, in fact, entire organizations have been developed along the lines of thinking they know when the return is going to be.

In the 1850's this is how the Seventh Day Adventist got their start. The Jehovah's Witnesses have made many predictions, most notably in 1914, that the Lord was going to return. This fellow is more contemporary with us. In September of 1994, he predicated that the Lord would return. Guess what? He was wrong. But that didn't stop him. He continues on the airwaves today. His name is Harold Camping. I wish I could say no one has ever listened to him. No one has ever left our church because they listened to him, but I can't tell you that, unfortunately. Why people follow people who are clearly wrong I have no idea, but whenever somebody gives a timetable, you should immediately reject it out of hand and say, "I'm not listening to them."

Even in our past, we have seen people who have a great desire to study world maps and what is going on in this country and what's going on in that country, and what God maybe doing. You buy these books from 30 years ago and you have got to get a laugh out of the thing because some of these countries don't even exist anymore. And even the nation of Israel established in 1948, how do we know that nation of Israel is going to be a part of anything? It may disappear and another one pop up and that may disappear. We don't know. God's proper timing, according to Acts 1:7, is unknown.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The anticipation of Christ's return keeps us alert in the good fight of faith. We will be alert if we are anticipating Christ's return. Just like that story, the parable in Matthew 25 of the ten virgins, five had a lamp and a supply of oil and five had a lamp and no supply of oil, and they were caught in the lurch, so therefore, Jesus said be on the alert, be prepared, be ready.

To conclude, the last couple of verses speak to the master of the good fight of faith. Our master, Jesus, is for whom we fight the good fight of faith "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."

These words about God gives us the sense of determination, for we know who we are fighting the good fight of faith for. He is described, and the more we know about who the Lord is and what His character is like, the better position we will be able to live the Christian life and fight the good fight of faith. The first character we find is Sovereignty He is the blessed and only Sovereign He is sovereign over all because He is powerful we are able to trust Him. He is so powerful, He is superior. His superiority is the King of kings and the Lord of lords over all. So, we can entrust ourselves to Him who judges righteously, because His judgment is more powerful than anybody else's. He is sovereign; He is superior. This phrase comes up in Revelation 19:16, spoken about the Lord Jesus. We see a glimpse of His deity in that.

Next is His immortality. "Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light." He never dies. He is immortal in a different sense than we are immortal. We are immortal in that we have been granted eternal life He is immortal because He has in His very nature immortality. It wasn't granted to Him; He possesses it He cannot die. We have been granted eternal life. So, it is He alone who possesses immortality, and He who no man can't see or can see. He has revealed some of Himself to us, but in terms of His full revelation, that has not yet been done He is invisible. No one can truly see Him.

His invisibility reminds me of the words of Jesus to Thomas. Remember what Jesus said to Thomas? He said, "You believe because you see; blessed are those who do not see and yet believe." God is invisible. Blessed are those who do not see and fight the good fight of faith. We persevere and move forward in faith. The fight is truly about faith and whether we trust God and what He says or not.

Let's pray together shall we? Lord, we ask that You would accomplish Your work of faith in each of our lives, and that we would have the determination and the will to persevere and to be a godly person as You called us to. We ask that in Jesus' name. Amen.