

# PM 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the Good Fight

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Timothy chapter 6 on page 1196 of the Church Bibles.! 1 Timothy chapter 6, let's hear the word of God.

! Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honour. So that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers.

Rather they must serve all the better. Since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the teaching that accords with godliness. He is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words. Which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions.

[ 1 : 16 ] And constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth. Imagining that godliness is a means of gain. Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment.

For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation. Into a snare. Into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.

It is through this craving that some have wandered from the faith. And pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things.

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

[ 2 : 21 ] 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. 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. To keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach.

Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Which we will display at the proper time. He who is the blessed and only sovereign. The King of kings and Lord of lords.

Who alone has immortality. Who dwells in unapproachable light. Whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion.

Amen. As for the rich in this present age. Charge them not to be haughty. Not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches. But on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

[ 3 : 27 ] They are to do good. To be rich in good works. To be generous and ready to share. 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. O Timothy. Guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

For by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. May God bless that reading of his holy word. 1 Timothy.

Chapter 6. And we want to focus on verses 11 and 12. 1 Timothy chapter 6. And we want to focus on the verses 11 and 12.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness. Godliness. Faith. Love. Steadfastness.

[ 4 : 30 ] Gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life. To which you were called. And about which you made good confession.

In the presence of many witnesses. A few years ago, our family went out to visit on holiday to Normandy.

And for somebody who loves the Second World War as much as I do, it was one of the best holidays I've ever been on. I got a chance to visit the beaches of Normandy. Which of course are famous because of D-Day on the 6th of June.

Where about 140,000, 150,000 troops all landed on the beaches of Normandy to invade France. Those famous beaches.

Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juneau and Sword. I got to stand on the cliffs of Pointe de Hoc.

[ 5 : 33 ] Where the US Rangers scaled those cliffs with ropes under fire. I got to stand at the Follet's Pocket. That famous battle where the German soldiers were surrounded.

And so many died. In many ways, you could argue if you're a historian that the Second World War was over.

As early as perhaps 1941. Some people argue once the German battleship, the Bismarck, was sunk. Germany didn't really have a navy. And in many ways, the war was over.

Some people argue that certainly after 1943. When Stalingrad wiped out the German 6th Army. That the Germans really couldn't win the war.

The battle, certainly by the 6th of May 1944. Was largely over. But yet the fiercest fighting of the war took place at the end of the war.

[ 6 : 36 ] Between the 6th of June 1944 and the end of August. There were 420,000 casualties. The fiercest fighting took place when the war was effectively over.

And it is the same in the Christian life. Christ at the cross has defeated the enemy. He has defeated sin.

He has defeated Satan. He has overcome death. And we find ourselves as Christians in this stage. This already but not yet phase of historical redemptive history.

Until Christ comes again. Until we are taken into glory. We're in this phase where Christ has won the war. But yet what we find in our daily lives.

What we find in church life. Is that the battle rages more fiercely than ever. Just like those few months around D-Day.

[ 7 : 49 ] We find that the Christian life is a battle. The battle rages within our hearts. Our sinful hearts. We are tempted to do things that we shouldn't do.

The battle rages as the world seeks to tempt us. To pull us away from the things of God. And the battle rages in the spiritual dimension.

We battle against powers that we can't see. So we battle against the world. The flesh. And the devil. And sometimes that battle feels very very fierce indeed.

And the theme of the Christian at war. Is a theme that is right throughout the word of God. The Christian life is not a life of comfort and ease.

It is a life of battle and warfare. And we particularly see this language in the letters of Paul. And we particularly see it in 1st and 2nd Timothy.

[ 8 : 51 ] 1st and 2nd Timothy is really a battle. It is really a... It's a... It's a book of church order. Paul says to Timothy in chapter 3 verse 15.

Sorry, verse 14. I hope to come to you soon. But I am writing these things to you so that if I delay. You may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.

Which is the church of the living God. A pillar and buttress of the truth. This letter, 1st Timothy, is really a book about how the church should be ordered.

It's a book about who should be an elder. And who should be a deacon. It's a book about the responsibilities of males and females in the church.

It's a book about how the widow should be treated. It's a book about, as we saw at the start of chapter 6. It's how workers should relate to their masters.

[ 9 : 56 ] It's a book about church order. And that, I think, gives us a clue as to why there is so much fighting talk in 1st Timothy.

Wherever somebody is seeking to establish a church. Or to plant a church, as Timothy was. There will be spiritual warfare. The last thing Satan wants in Scotland today.

Is the planting of new churches. And the preaching of the gospel. And the ordering of the church. That's the last thing the devil wants. So wherever the church is planted.

There will be great spiritual warfare. And we see this language right throughout the book. We see it in chapter 1, verse 18. This charge I entrust you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you.

That by them you may wage the good warfare. That word for waging the good warfare is the word that we get from strategy.

[10:58] Paul is saying to Timothy, you need to have a sin fighting strategy. We see it in our text this evening in chapter 6. Fight the good fight of faith.

We see it in 2nd Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 and 4. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. We see it in chapter 4, 2nd Timothy chapter 4, verse 7.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Again and again, Paul is talking about the spiritual warfare of the Christian life.

Satan doesn't mind if we drift through life. He doesn't mind if we tinker around at the edges of Christianity. He doesn't mind if we dip in and out of Christianity.

But the minute we get serious about Christianity, the devil wants to destroy us. And the Christian life, therefore, is a battle. It's a fight.

[12:08] So what can we learn about the Christian as a soldier from 1st Timothy 6 tonight? I just want to notice three very simple things very briefly.

Paul says to Timothy that he is to flee, he is to follow, and he is to fight. Let's just take those three things in order.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.

The Christian life involves running. It involves fleeing. What is Timothy meant to run away from?

Well, as we saw in chapter 6, he is to flee from the teaching and the corruption of the false teachers that had come into Ephesus.

Let's just take those two things separately. First of all, what is the teaching that he is to flee from?

We see in verse 3, if anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness.

[13:32] What were the false teachers in Ephesus teaching? Well, we get glimpses of it through the book of 1 Timothy.

It says in 1 Timothy 1, verse 4, Nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God which is by faith.

Certain teaching had come into Ephesus which we call Gnosticism. These teachers, they believed that the way to be close to God was through mystical visions and genealogies.

Everything physical was evil but everything spiritual was good. And they were obsessed with these myths and these genealogies as it says in chapter 1.

They were trying to say that Christ isn't enough. What we need is Christ plus something else. We need Christ plus mystical visions and Christ plus fables or endless genealogies.

[14:53] But there was also another form of teaching in Ephesus and that was the ascetics. We see that in chapter 4 verses 1 to 5.

The ascetics believed that Christ wasn't enough for a holy life. They needed to have all these rules and regulations. It says there in chapter 4 verse 3, These ascetics had created all these rules and regulations and they said unless you live this higher spiritual life you won't draw near to God.

So these two errors had come into the church Ephesus and what Paul was saying to Timothy is he was saying flee these things flee this false teaching have nothing to do with it because this teaching says that Christ does not need to be central and Christ is not sufficient for the Christian life.

It was taking them away from Christ. Christ we must always remember that the centre and at the core of the gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was the problem with the Pharisees wasn't it? They believed in the Old Testament law they loved the law but Christ was not central. It says in John chapter 5 you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

[16:34] The problem with error is that it doesn't it teaches that Christ is not central and sufficient in the gospel. And whenever a church begins to drift away from its foundation it's because the church ceases to preach Christ and him crucified.

Christ and him crucified ceases to be the central theme of that church and it begins to drift away into false teaching. But we also see that this false teaching Paul says back in verse 3 if anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness.

You see the problem with this teaching was that it didn't lead to godliness. It led to corruption as we'll go and see in a minute. What leads to godliness?

Is it myths? Is it genealogies? Is it legalism? None of these things lead to godliness. What is the secret to godliness? The secret to godliness is Christ.

Keeping Christ central. We are made holy in the death and the resurrection and the ascension of Christ.

[18:02] That's why we have these famous words in chapter 3 of 1st Timothy. Great indeed verse 16 we confess is the mystery of godliness.

What is the mystery of godliness? Godliness he that is Christ was manifest in the flesh vindicated by the spirit seen by angels proclaimed among the nations believed on in the world taken up into glory.

The mystery of godliness is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. When he saves us he also sanctifies us he makes us holy and our lives are a constant battle against sin but fundamentally it is knowing Christ that we are made holy.

So we see that the teaching of these false teachers Timothy is to flee from it but he's also to flee from the character of these false teachers. What is the character of these false teachers?

Well he says that they are in verse 4 they are puffed up with conceit and understand nothing. You see false teaching leads to pride doesn't it?

[19:14] people have their own platform they have their own teaching and it leads to pride.

Contrast that with what Paul says in chapter 1 verses 15 and 16. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

What did the gospel do to Paul? humble them. What did this teaching do to the false teachers? It filled them with pride.

It puffed them up with their own conceit. And you see wherever the true gospel is preached it humbles sinners. Because it's all about Christ it's not about us.

What else did these what else was in the character of these false teachers? They were puffed up with conceit. We're also told in our passage that they had an unhealthy craving for controversies.

What happens when a church begins to lose its moorings? When it drifts into false teaching? It breaks apart. Because it's no longer united around Christ.

[20:25] It's no longer united around the truth. There is congregational corruption and there is personal corruption. What are the characteristics of congregational corruption?

We're told in our passage envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicion and constant friction.

That's the characteristic of a church that begins to lose its moorings and drift into false teaching.

What's the characteristics of these false teachers? depraved in mind, depraved of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

You see, these people were seeking platforms to puff themselves up and to promote themselves.

That's what happens when we move away from Christ being central in our churches and in our preaching.

the fleece becomes more important than the flock. These people, they want to gain for themselves.

[21:41] And you see, what Paul is teaching Timothy is that only in Christ there is godliness and contentment. So this is just in our first point.

Timothy is called to flee the false teaching and the corrupt character of these false teachers. How do we know what false teaching looks like?

If we go into a church, how do we know if that church is teaching false doctrine? Well, the key test is, is Christ at the centre of the church?

Is Christ and Him crucified? The central preaching of the church is the gospel central, not man. It's not about the minister.

It's not about the preacher. It's about Christ and Him crucified. Does the teaching lead to holiness of life? Or does it lead to corruption and gain?

[ 22 : 43 ] The job of the minister, the job of the elders, is to preserve the deposit of truth that they have been given as stewards of that truth. And that's what Paul is saying to Timothy.

Guard the deposit that is in you. Guard and fight for the truth that has been handed down from generation to generation. So Timothy is to flee false teaching and he's to flee the corruption of these false teachers.

But secondly, Timothy is to follow. It's not enough for us just to flee what is wrong. It's not enough for us to turn our backs on falsehood.

We must also follow what is good and what is right. Timothy is called to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness.

The Christian life involves an active pursuit of Christ and what is good and what is right. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord but he loves him who pursues righteousness, says in Proverbs.

[ 24 : 02 ] He loves him who pursues righteousness. righteousness. We as Christians, we're not here marking time. We're not drifting. We're pursuing the things of God.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, every athlete exercises self control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath but we an imperishable.

So I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air. but I discipline my body and keep it under control lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

The Christian life involves discipline. It involves spiritual fitness. It involves training in godliness. As we have earlier on in 1 Timothy.

When Paul talks to Timothy about training in godliness it's the word that we get for gymnasium. we are to train ourselves in godliness. We are to pursue all these virtues.

[ 25 : 11 ] And what are the virtues that we are to follow? We are to follow righteousness and godliness. We are to live righteously in the midst of a wicked and perverse world.

Paul says in 2 Timothy he says you are to flee youthful passions. You are to train yourself in righteousness 2 Timothy 3 16 All scripture is breathed out by god and profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness.

righteousness. What makes us righteous? By following the word of God. We need the word of God if we are going to live righteously in this wicked world.

What is godliness? Well godliness as we saw this morning is a deep reverence and love for God. It is a conviction to live in his ways and according to his standards.

Somebody has said godliness is living life in the presence of God under the authority of God for the glory of God. Fifteen times godliness is mentioned in the New Testament and nine of those times is in 1 or 2 Timothy.

[ 26 : 38 ] The importance of godliness particularly in the life of the ministry. And then we see that Timothy is to pursue faith and love.

Faith and love. We as Christians need these traits. What is faith?

Faith is a deep dependence on God. It's a deep trust in God and his ways. faith. We're not to be self-reliant, we're to be God reliant, we're to be Christ reliant.

We are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves is never alone. We need to be dependent on God and it needs to be combined with love.

love. And then he also says that he is to pursue steadfastness and gentleness. There's no point in being a Christian one minute and then changing our mind.

[ 27 : 44 ] We are to be steadfast. Our natural response to conflict in the church, perhaps conflict in the world, is we want to run, we want to hide but we are called as Christians to be steadfast.

We are called to hold the line. Later on in Titus, Paul makes the point with regard to those who are to be leaders in the church, that they are to be people who are steadfast.

Titus 2 verse 2, older men are to be sober minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness.

We're not to be flipping and flopping, we're to be steadfast. We're to be like the man in Psalm 1 who is planted by the river, whose roots go deep.

He's not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Somebody has said the Christian life is a long obedience in the same direction.

[ 28 : 53 ] We are to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding, in the work of the Lord. And then lastly, he mentions gentleness.

What is gentleness? Well, gentleness is strength under control. It's a sword that is sheathed. We must remember that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

We don't fight in the same way that the world fights. We fight with spiritual weapons. When people say awful things about us, we don't retaliate.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We don't fight in the way that the world fights. We're to fight with gentleness and with meekness. We see that we are to flee, we are to follow, we are to follow after all these virtues.

And then lastly, thirdly and lastly, we are to fight. Having told Timothy to flee from false doctrine, from the corruption of the false teachers, he tells him to follow after all these virtues.

[ 30 : 12 ] And then in verse 12, he says, fight the good fight of the faith. This is not just any fight, it's the fight of faith that we are to fight.

All Christians are called to fight in the fight of faith. Timothy is to fight for the faith, the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

It says in 1 Timothy 6, let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

Timothy is entrusted with this teaching that he is to teach consistently and to hand on to the next generation. It says in 6 verse 20, O Timothy guard the deposit entrusted to you.

He talks about the truth as being like a deposit that Timothy is to guard for the next generation. This metaphor of fighting the good fight is the same language as Hebrews chapter 12, it's the imagery of running the race, fighting the good fight.

[ 31 : 32 ] We're in a race and we need to run until they end. It's the example of an athlete competing in a sport.

I don't know if you ever run a marathon but you need to think of the intensity to run a marathon or compete in a sport. And that's what the Christian life is like.

We are to run the race with diligence. We have to be single minded. We have to be disciplined. We have to be focused. We have to be spiritually fit.

An athlete can't sit around eating junk food all the time. We need to be spiritually fit and so the Christian needs to be spiritually fit to fight the good fight of faith.

Spiritual training involves habits, spiritual habits, daily devotions, attendance at the means of grace, fellowship. Fellowship. These are the things that are involved in the discipline of the Christian life.

[ 32 : 41 ] We believe in a gospel of grace that we spoke about this morning. We're saved by grace but we are to battle and we are to fight and we are to live a life of spiritual discipline.

Paul said in Colossians, put to death what is earthly in you. You must put them all away he says in Colossians 3.

We're to put away all the things of evil and sin and we are to cleave to that which is good. We are to wage a good warfare. We're to fight the fight of the faith.

Our captain has won the victory but he has given us weapons to fight and he has promised the presence of the Holy Spirit as we battle. 2 Corinthians 10 gives us that encouragement we, for though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. We are to contend for the faith.

[ 33 : 55 ] We are to fight the good fight. The apostolic doctrine, the truth that was entrusted to Timothy is of vital importance because it involves the matters of eternal life.

And if we lose the gospel, if the gospel becomes corrupted, then men and women will go to a lost eternity. These are of vital importance.

So what can we say just by way of conclusion? Paul exhorts Timothy to flee, to follow and to fight. There's one other exhortation.

He says that we are also to fasten, we are to take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Whatever else we grasp hold of in this life, let us grasp hold of eternal life. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession.

[ 35 : 10 ] This life is a battle. There is a war raging. We are to flee, we are to follow, we are to fight and we are to fasten on.

The captain of our salvation has won the battle. In many ways we are in the last stages of the war, but the war rages as fiercely now as it did at the beginning.

And as we journey to eternity we need to engage in that battle. God has given us the grace to fight for him. He has given us his Holy Spirit to strengthen us and to help us.

Jesus said in John 16 these things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace, in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Let's take courage tonight that the battle has been won, but the battle continues to rage, but we have a great captain who will give us the grace and the strength we need to fight the battle.

[ 36 : 22 ] And we are to follow after these great virtues of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness. And we are to fight the good fight.

We are in that already but not yet phase of redemptive history. Let's fight that good fight because eternal issues are at stake.

Let's not allow the church to become corrupted with false teaching and with the corruption of false teachers. Let's contend for the faith. faith that was once delivered to the saints.

And may God give us the grace to do so. Let's pray.