

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 July 2021

- [0 : 00] Okay, all right. Good morning, everyone. All right. Let us pray. Father, Lord, we thank you for this privilege that we often take for granted.
- ! We pray, O Lord, that that will not be true of us today. Lord, that we would recognize the gift that you've given to us in your living world.
- And Father, we pray specifically for the word that will be preached today. We pray, O Lord, that you will speak through me and cause your servants to hear as they ought.
- And Father, we pray that those who are here and are in darkness, Lord, that you would be pleased to reveal your light to them. In the name of Jesus, we pray. And all God's people say, Amen.
- Amen. Well, this morning, we are going to be speaking for what I believe will be a short while from the book of 1 Timothy.
- [1 : 17] Specifically, 1 Timothy, chapter 6, verses 11 and 12. And if you are like me, you perhaps have not heard many messages from the book of 1 Timothy.
- And perhaps you don't know many passages from this book either. There's one really that comes to mind. As a little child, I remember an adult, I won't say who she was, very close to me.
- And she quoted this book very often. And her favorite text was, you know, drink a little for the stomach's sake. Did I say she? I said she, right?
- Wow. Well, let's just say it's not my mother. Let's make that clear. Yeah, so, but that's interesting.
- But this is an interesting book. This book was written by the Apostle Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy.
- [2 : 38] And this book really is about church governance primarily. You know, how the church should be structured, the order in the church, those kinds of things.
- But we are going to examine a couple verses that are not just intended for church leaders or leadership, but for all of us.
- For all of us. Let's take a look now at what Paul writes to Timothy and by extension to us in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 11 and 12.
- 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.
- [3 : 42] 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.
- Paul writes these clear words to Timothy. And in these words, I believe Paul is telling Timothy that believers are to preserve and strengthen their practice, the way they live, and their doctrine.
- Paul tells Timothy that we ought to grow, that we ought to do certain things to strengthen the way we live and strengthen our doctrine as well.
- Paul commands us, he tells us, he instructs us, that we ought to do four things.

That we ought to flee. See that in the first verse, verse 11. He says, flee. And then he instructs further, he says, pursue.

[5 : 20] Then he continues, he says, fight. And then finally, Paul tells us, to take.

Flee, to pursue, to fight, and to take. Paul is telling us in these two verses that we have to know when to flee, we have to know when to pursue, we have to know when to fight, and we have to know when to take.

And if you're like me, sometimes you get it mixed up. The things you ought to be fleeing, you pursue. And when you ought to be fighting, you flee.

And when you ought to flee, you take. But let's take a look at the very first point.

The command to flee. Paul writes to Timothy, Paul writes in this section, But as for you, as for you, but as for you, O man of God, flee these things.

[6 : 57] These words, but as for you, tell us that Paul is getting ready to draw a sharp contrast with something that he said earlier.

But as for you, you know, if I say something to you, I say, you know, Sally's going up the road, and Sally's doing X, Y, Z. But as for you, I'm about to tell you something that you ought to do that differs from what Sally was doing.

And in a short moment, we will see what that is. We will see what Paul is contrasting. But before we do it, it is helpful to consider the single word that really characterizes Paul's instructions here.

It is this word, flee. Flee. The word flee means to run away from someone or something.

Say that again. The word flee means to run away from something or someone. You didn't know that, eh? That in the Bible, we find instructions to flee, to run away from something.

[8 : 24] or someone. Here, Paul writes Timothy and tells him to run away from these things. It is as if Paul is saying to him that he should have nothing to do with them.

Don't even consider them. Don't even debate them. Don't even think about them. Just run away. Just run away. away.

He should not engage them. He should not entertain them. Paul writes to Timothy. He should not consider them. He should simply run away from them.

Flee. But what are these things that Timothy is to run away from? They're found in the preceding verses.

In the second half, beginning in the second half of verse 2 of this chapter. Paul writes, teach and urge these things.

[9 : 31] And in verse 3, he says, 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 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

But godliness with contentment is great gain 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 the root of all kinds of evil.

It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the truth, from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

[11 : 07] Essentially, well, you remember in verse 11 Paul says to Timothy immediately after this, Paul says, but as for you, but as for you, so Paul is saying to Timothy, this is what happens, this is what we see happening, but as for you, flee these things.

Essentially, Paul is telling Timothy to flee false teachers. He identified several marks of these false teachers in the verses we just read.

The first is unsound doctrine. Paul says, flee it, flee them. unsound doctrine.

It is divisive. It is evidenced by those who preach and teach about the love of money. You know, they combine there as if there is any combination, really, between the gospel and money.

Paul essentially says, give them no air time whatsoever. Don't waste time with them. Run from them as if your life depended on it.

[12 : 34] In their commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, our Kent Hudgers and Barron Chapel write, if we desire to be men and women of God, there are times we must show our back to evil and run as fast as our legs will take us in the other direction.

Now, you will be aware that Paul said this in reference to these false teachers. But Paul could just have easily said the same thing about many things and we ought to be fleeing you and I as believers.

Not considering, not allowing, not giving them any air time whatsoever. And Paul tells this young, energetic man, like some of the young men in here today, he speaks his language.

Paul knew that Timothy would understand this being a young man. He says, Timothy, flee, run away, run away from it, flee evil. Specifically, Paul tells us that sound doctrine comes from and is about Christ.

It promotes godliness. No evidence of that. Flee it. Paul tells us that divisiveness exists where there is an unhealthy craving for controversy.

[14 : 23] Where there is an unhealthy craving for quarrels about words. He says, where there is evidence of a love for many, where some believe that godliness leads to financial gain.

He said, run from that. And you and I have seen that. And indeed, you and I see that. And Paul's clear instruction to us is to run away from it, to flee it, to not entertain it.

The desire to be rich. He says, run away from it. Run away from it. But as Paul continues, Paul says, as believers, we're not only called to flee, but we're also called to pursue.

And here Paul tells us, he commands us that we ought to pursue holiness. Listen to what Paul writes in the second half of verse 11.

pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

[15 : 46] Paul gives us six qualities that we ought to pursue in pairs. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

righteousness, righteousness, righteousness, righteousness, righteousness, and godliness. Paul says, you want something to run after, Timothy? Pursue righteousness and godliness. Pursue developing and growing your relationship with others because your relationship with others should be marked by justice and fairness and your relationship with God.

here you ought to continually pursue holiness, holy living. And then Paul says to him, Timothy, run after, pursue faith and love, faithfulness and love for others, steadfastness and gentleness.

Not quitting in the face of challenges. Gentle, being patient and tender when dealing with people in difficult circumstances.

promises. John Stott, about these, this particular admonition, writes, we also run after many things which attract us.

[17 : 36] Say that again, we often run after many things that attract us. Pleasure, promotion, fame, wealth, and power. Then he continues, instead, we should concentrate on the pursuit of holiness.

There is no particular secret, then he continues, and this is a big point here that Stott makes, there is no particular secret to learn, no formula to recite, no technique to master.

The apostle gives no teaching on holiness and how to attain it. We are simply to run from evil as we run from danger, as we run after goodness, as we run after success.

That is, we have to give our mind time and energy to both fight and pursuit. Once we see evil as evil, it is.

Once we see evil as the evil it is, we will want to flee it. And once we see goodness as the good it is, we will want to pursue it.

[19 : 06] That is the mind that you and I as believers are to have. what God is saying is that listen, you know, Paul isn't telling you to, you know, say, pursue, pursue, pursue 10 times for the next 30 days and flee, flee, flee for the next 45 days.

He's saying there is no secret to this, there is no secret potion to drink, there is no mixture here. He says it's quite simple, it's quite straightforward.

pursue these things, pursue righteousness, goodness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness, but flee evil.

And then Paul continues his instructions to his beloved brethren, his beloved disciple. Paul writes to him, says to him, fight, fight, he has already instructed him to flee and to pursue, now he tells him to stand up and fight, fight, fight what?

The good fight of the faith, fight the good fight of the faith, Paul writes. to this point, Paul tells Timothy to watch his life.

[20 : 43] Paul says, watch your life, watch what you're doing, watch where you're going, watch what you're pursuing, watch what you are fleeing, don't flee righteousness when you ought to be pursuing it, don't flee holiness when you ought to be pursuing it, these are things about life, about the way you and I are supposed to live.

And to this point, Paul has written to him about his life. Now he tells him to watch his doctrine, life and doctrine, they go together.

Doctrine without life is dead theology. Doctrine without life is dead theology. You could have all the theology in the world, but if you ain't living right, that's the point.

It's dead. And life without doctrine is dead faith. Timothy is not to flee or pursue here, but he is to fight.

Fight. Again, Paul is writing, and it is amazing to me that Paul writes in this way to this young, vibrant man.

[22 : 09] And he writes to him and he says, you see, no man can be stuff, young fellow. He says, fight, fight the good fight of the faith.

He is to fight for the doctrines as contained in scripture. Sound doctrine must be defended over the generations if successive generations are to be beneficiaries of it.

That, my brothers and sisters, is more evident today than ever before. fight for good fight of the faith.

And I thought it would serve us this money if we ought to just take just a few minutes, I'm not going to be long with this, but just a few minutes to consider the doctrine that we hold dear.

Paul writes to Timothy and by extension, he writes to us, fight the good, fight of the faith, but what's your doctrine? What is it that you believe?

[23 : 35] And I'm looking around now and I think every single person in here can access the church's website. And there you will find the church's statement of faith.

So if Paul were here today, Paul would say, listen, the church's statement of faith which is based on the word of God is on the church's website.

Know it and fight for it, stand firmly for it. But you rather know it first. Statement of faith.

And I'm looking at it and I'm reading it. And it says, you're going to forgive me, I'm going to have to take these off and put them back on. At the core of our doctrine is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The glorious truth that Jesus Christ died and was raised so that sinners would be reconciled to God. The gospel is our primary passion and the driving influence in our churches, preaching, worship, small group, and outreach.

[25 : 00] church. And then when you go to the site, you see that there are 14 points.

And we ought to become familiar, we ought to familiarize ourselves with each one of them. And we ought to be ready to fight for each one of them. The scriptures, we accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as a written word of God.

Fight for that. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind.

You've got to fight for that. The next one, God is triune. There is one God, infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love.

The next one, God the Father. God the Father is the creator of heaven and earth. By his word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world from nothing.

[26 : 23] number four, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, was the eternal word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.

He was perfect in nature, teaching and obedience. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Man. This is what it says about man. This is what the Bible, and these are summaries, these are not things that somebody just made up. God made man, male and female, in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him.

Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God, being estranged from his maker, yet responsible to him, he became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved, and apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God.

And we can go on about the gospel. Indeed, I want to read this one. Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

[28 : 00] Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel. His resurrection is the power of the gospel, and his ascension is the glory of the gospel.

And then we go on to man's response to the gospel, man's inheritance through the gospel, sanctification, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church, sacraments of the church, and finally, the consummation.

So what's my point? my point is that if you and I are going to follow Paul's clear directives here to stand and to fight the good fight of the faith, then we got to know the church's doctrine.

We got to know it. And we have to be prepared to fight for it. Paul writes that Paul says that this is not an ordinary fight.

He says it's a good fight. He says it's a good fight. Why is it a good fight? It's a good fight because we are bringing glory to God when we fight this way, when we stand firmly and we fight for these things.

[29 : 30] Paul not only tells us to flee and to pursue and to fight, but finally in this section, Paul tells us to take.

To take what? to take hold of eternal life. You see that in 12b? Paul says take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

Now that's interesting, isn't it? For Paul to write to Timothy, his son in the Lord, and say take hold of eternal life.

Because you would think that on the face of it, you would say, well, Timothy is a believer, so he already has eternal life.

That would be a reasonable thought. What is Paul saying here to Timothy? Paul instructs him, and he instructs all of us to take hold of eternal life.

[30 : 48] What is he saying to us? These instructions seem confusing, since in the same verse, Paul says that Timothy has confessed Christ.

He says, Timothy, you have confessed Christ, in the same verse, yet he says to him, take hold of eternal life, which is, as you know, the gift that Christ gives to those who confess him as Lord.

Surely, Paul does not mean that Timothy is an unbeliever. perhaps some might deduce from those words that Paul meant that Timothy is to grab hold of eternal life, so that he doesn't lose it.

Maybe some people are thinking, well, you know what Paul is saying to Timothy. Paul is saying, listen, Timothy, you better grab a hold of this, take it, hold on to it, so that you don't lose it.

But you and I know that the witness of Scripture does not support that either. You know, Paul doesn't say, you know, Timothy, boy, you got eternal life yesterday, you better grab a hold of this, so that you don't lose it.

[32 : 18] I don't think so. Paul knew that Timothy was one whose faith was in Christ.

and the reward for such was indeed eternal life, which only the Lord gives. So what is Paul saying to Timothy?

Timothy? I believe an accurate rendering, indeed, according to biblical scholars, and in this instance, specifically John start, an accurate rendering of the original language is to take hold of, to grasp something with violence, and to take hold of in order to make it one's own, one's own.

I believe Paul here is saying to Timothy, you have eternal life. Now, take it, grab onto it, live in view of it, allow it to perfume your life, allow it to inform who you are.

It is to remove eternal life from the ethers, as it were, and place it in the realm of the pragmatic.

[34 : 05] Let me say that another way. Paul is saying, take this thing that for us, yes, it's real, but for some it might be just something, a segment of your imagination, something that you can't grab onto physically.

Paul is saying, I want you, Timothy, to know that this is real. I want it to influence the way you live.

I want the fact that you have eternal life to guide the way you interact with others. I want you to view life and life's circumstances through the prism of the fact that you have eternal life.

Grab a hold of it. Grab a hold of it. Don't do it like this. Don't just pick it up softly. Grab a hold of it. Violently grab a hold of this truth, young man.

How do we do that? How do we grab a hold of eternal life? by letting everything else go and taking hold of this beautiful reality.

[35 : 39] You know, if you've got, if you're a, if you are a drowning man and they throw you a rope and you got a trillion dollar worth of gold piece in your hand, but you know you can only take, use your hand for something, not, either you keep the gold or you hold on to the rope.

Which one are you going to hold on to? You let the gold go. Well, Paul is telling Timothy, listen, the only thing that matters is eternal life. Grab a hold of it.

There's nothing that compares to it. Grab a hold of it with all of your might. Grab a hold, your man, of eternal life.

Paul is saying to him that there is nothing that compares. Grab a hold of eternal life. View life's challenges. View life's opportunities.

View life's trials. View life's successes. View them all through the lens of eternal life.

[36 : 52] Now, what does that look like when you and I view these things through eternal life? We know that all of this stuff is fleeting. We bear it loosely.

Paul is saying to him, where are the things of this world loosely? Know that this too shall pass.

Let other things go. But not eternal life. Have eternal life in view when interacting with others.

When interacting with a difficult person. Have eternal life in view. When in a dispute, have eternal life in view.

Take hold of eternal life in your relationships. Take hold of eternal life in your business. Take hold of eternal life, I dare say, in your politics.

[38 : 00] Take hold of eternal life in your school. Take hold of eternal life is also about taking hold of the one who gives it.

You can't take hold of eternal life without taking hold of the one who gives it. To have faith in him.

When we take hold of eternal life, we are taking hold of Jesus Christ, our faith in him, and to follow and to obey him. My question to us today is quite simple.

are we taking hold of eternal life? Are you grabbing on to it? As we conclude, we find in Paul's writings to Timothy that Paul makes clear that he not only preaches, but he lives what he preaches.

Listen to what Paul writes in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 6 verses 6 through 7.

[39 : 31] Paul writes, You hear this young man?

This old man. You're just beginning, but you need to know that you can end the race well. You can end it well.

Paul says, I've been poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. Then he says that I have fought this good fight, Timothy.

I've done what I've instructed you to do, and I've finished this race, and I've kept the faith. as a believer, are you fleeing what you ought to flee?

Pursuing what you ought to pursue? Fighting what you should fight? And taking what you should take?

[40 : 55] perhaps your answer is, I'm trying, but truly I'm not doing as I should.

Well, if that's your answer, you're probably where all, if most, if not all of us are. that's a good place to start, that's a good place.

None of us, I dare say, is following Paul's instructions perfectly. And the extent to which we do follow Paul's instructions, instructions, we owe it to the walk of the Holy Spirit.

So what am I saying? Really simply, I'm saying this, that if you're not doing this, if you're not fleeing and pursuing, fighting and taking this Paul is struck, if you're not doing this to the extent that you should, you're not condemned.

That's my first point, you're not condemned. And my second and final point is, like all of us, you need the help of the Holy Spirit.

[42 : 30] That's my message to you, that you need the help of the Holy Spirit. We need God's help. Young man, I don't care how strong you are. Young lady, I don't care how strong you are.

Old man, old woman, older man, an older woman, I don't care how strong you are, we all need the Lord's help.

If you're not a believer, the truth is we know exactly where you are as it pertains to these instructions. We know what you're doing.

We know you're not fleeing when you should be fleeing. We know you ain't pursuing what you are to be pursuing. We know you aren't fighting what you are to fight.

And we know you can't take what hasn't been given to you. So we know where you are. you're pursuing things that ultimately will perish.

[43 : 38] And you are in fact running away from eternal life rather than grabbing a hold of it. Our prayer for you is that the Lord will open your eyes and reveal to you the unfruitfulness of your life.

Let us pray. Father, your word to us this day has been plain, but we acknowledge our shortcoming.

Lord, would you help us? Would you strengthen us? Would you give us resolve? Would you by your Holy Spirit convict us?

Not only in this moment, but throughout the day. Indeed, Lord, for the rest of our lives, would you continue to convict us? Lord, teach us daily what we ought to pursue and what we ought to run away from.

Lord, I especially pray for our young men today. For, Lord, there is a sense that these words are especially for them, for they are young and strong like Timothy.

[45 : 16] and Lord, I pray that you would enable them, but firstly, Lord, that you would open their eyes.

Open their eyes first, Lord. Help them to see their condition. Help them, oh Lord, to see and to learn from the experiences of others, Lord.

Lord, remove the scales from their eyes is our prayer. Convict them, save them, Lord, to the utmost.

Lord, cause them once saved to grab a hold of eternal life. Lord, only you can do that by your Holy Spirit. So we ask, oh Lord, that you would have mercy on them and not them alone, but all of us.

In the name of Jesus, we pray and all God's people say amen. I invite you to please stand with me as we prepare to sing Take My Life.

[46 : 31] Take My Life. Take My Life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee.

Take My moments and my days. Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take My hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.

Take My feet and let them be swift and beautiful. love for Thee. Verse 2, Take My Voice.

Take My Voice. Take My Voice. And let me sing always only for my King. Take My lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold. Take My silver and my gold. Take My and my intellect and use every power choose.

[47 : 51] as You choose. Here am I advance of me. Take it's all for Thee.

Verse 3, Take my will. Take my will and make it thine. It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is thine own. It shall be thy royal throne. Take my love, my Lord, I pour.

At your feet, it's treasure store. Take myself, and I will be ever only all for thee.

Here am I, all of me. Take my life, it's all for thee.

[49 : 11] Here am I, here am I, all of me. Take my life, take my life, it's all for thee.

Last line of verse 3, take myself. Take myself, and I will be ever only all