

# 1 Timothy

## I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 6:12-16** . . . 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.

## B. Prayer

## II. Three exhortations concerning living a godly life

A. In **vs 12-14** there are three exhortations concerning living a godly life. The first two are found in **vs 12** and the third is found in **vs 14**. They are:

1. **Fight** the good fight of faith;
2. **Take hold of** the eternal life to which you were called;
3. **Keep the commandment without stain or reproach** until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. This does not mean the information found around these three exhortations is unimportant, but to get a clear picture of what the scripture is saying to us in **vs 12-16**, it helps to isolate these three exhortations and deal with them as a unified whole.

## B. **Fight the good fight of faith** . . .

1. To fight the good fight of faith is not to enter a single battle, but to engage yourself in a prolonged war made up of many battles. It is to continue fighting the good fight of faith until the war has ended.
  - a. However, in fighting this good fight, we are not being exhorted to fight for the faith, that is, for our religious beliefs or the freedom of religion, but to fight to live a godly, Christ-like life.
  - b. And as Christians down through the ages have learned, to go from unbelief in God and from being a self-centered sinner to

trusting God and making a deliberate, planned, and serious minded effort to become a godly, mature Christian requires the kind of fighting that is prolonged, difficult, and tiring.

2. You may be wondering why this fight is so challenging. But the better question is, **who** are we fighting that makes it so difficult, tiring, and prolonged?
  - a. First and foremost, we are fighting ourselves.
    - (1) We are fighting what the Bible calls our **old self** (Eph 4:22; Rom 6:6; Col 3:9), the **flesh** (Rom 8:5-9), and the **old leaven** (1 Cor 5:7). Theologians refer to this as the **old nature** or our **sin nature**. And I refer to it as our ungodly, self-serving, sinful and foolish beliefs, values, fears, inclinations, desires, expectations, and habits that pull us or push us away from God and godliness.
    - (2) But this is only half of what is required when fighting with ourselves. The other half is putting on what the Bible calls the **new self** (Eph 4:24; Col. 3:10), the **renewed mind** (Rom 12:2), **conformity to the image of Christ** (Rom 8:29), and **walking by the Spirit** (Gal 5:16-17). Theologians refer to this as the **new nature** or our **God nature**.
    - (3) It is my experience that the fighting required to put off our old nature and put on Christ-likeness is not won in a single battle. Nor are you able to change your whole old nature into Christ-likeness all at once. Rather, it is an all-out, prolonged war with many battles – some of which you will lose. But if you persevere, winning will increase and losing will decrease until you've gained a new way of living in whatever specific area you have been dealing with.
  - b. Though fighting with ourselves to put off our old nature and put on Christ-likeness is the hardest war any of us will face in this life, we are not our only enemy. We are in a constant war with the devil – who tempts us, and with the world – which continues to pressure us to conform to its way of thinking and living.
    - (1) The devil's persistence in tempting us and turning us against God is seen in the words of **Luke 4:13**, "When the devil had finished every temptation (*of Jesus*), he left Him until an opportune (*advantageous*) time." You can be sure that if the devil dealt with Jesus like this, he will do the same to you.
    - (2) The exhortation to turn away from being conformed to this world, and instead be transformed by the renewing of our

mind (**Romans 12:2**), confirms how threatening the world and its ways are to our spiritual well-being.

(3) In **Ephesians 6:11-17**, Paul describes the war we face with the devil and the world, and what we need to do to win battle after battle.

(4) “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (*God is our source of power*). [11] Put on the **full** armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the **schemes** of the devil (*God is our source of protection*). [12] For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore, take up the **full** armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm (*Though God is our source of power and protection, we are the ones who face the enemy*). [14] Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; [16] in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. [17] And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

3. We face a triple threat when fighting the good fight of faith – our old self, the devil, and the world. And this is why we must continue fighting until victory is won in order to become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

a. However, though you must do the fighting, we see from the Word of God that you are not fighting alone. God is with you. He empowers you. He helps you. He has given you His Holy Spirit to lead you, guide you, strengthen you, teach you, and enlighten you so that you can understand and apply His word. He protects you from being tempted beyond your ability to resist. He has given you the living word which He inspired so that it can teach you, reprove you, correct you, and train you in righteousness so that you can be adequate and equipped to live a godly life. And He has given you the Body of Christ to encourage and support you in fighting the good fight of faith.

- b. So yes, you are in a prolonged and difficult war. But you have God with you, in you, and for you, so that just like Israel going in and taking the Promised Land, you do not have to lose a single battle. You will have to do the fighting, and you may get wounded along the way, but the only way you can lose a battle is to give up, or take a break, or rejoin the enemy for a time.
- C. **Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called . . .**
- 1. To take hold of eternal life is to keep a firm grip on it so that it cannot slip out of your grasp.
    - a. Probably the most effective way to keep a firm grip on eternal life is to continue fighting the good fight of faith, that is, to continue putting off parts of your old, sin nature and putting Christ-likeness on in their place as you pursue godliness and becoming a mature Christian.
    - b. The reality is, you won't lose your grip on eternal life and become like the dog who returns to eating its vomit (*the very thing that made it sick*), or like the pig who returns to rolling in the mud (*the very thing that made it dirty*) if you are focused on fighting the good fight of faith.
    - c. This does not guarantee you won't fall or fail for a moment or longer, but you cannot remain a partner to sin for long if your intention and plan and focus is on putting off whatever is part of your old nature that still needs putting off, and putting Christ-likeness in its place.
  - 2. This brings us to the third exhortation – which tells us how far we are to go in fleeing what is evil and pursuing what is godly.
- D. **Keep the commandment** without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1. There is no clear indication what the phrase, “keep the commandment” is referring to. However, based on the context it is reasonable to conclude that the commandment we are to keep is directly related to fighting the good fight of faith and keeping a firm grip on eternal life.
  - 2. What is clear is that we are to keep the commandment **without stain or reproach** until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we are to faithfully continue fighting and keeping a firm grip on eternal life until we die or Jesus returns.

- a. To keep the commandment without stain is to keep it without defect or imperfection or any deficiency in word or deed.
  - b. To keep the commandment without reproach means having nothing known or obvious or apparent about us that can rightfully be condemned or shown to be ungodly.
3. Keeping these two exhortations may sound impossible, especially since we are still fighting against ourselves.
  - a. However, it is possible to keep the commandment without stain or reproach if we will properly respond to failure on our part.
  - b. For example, upon realizing we have failed by doing something selfish or sinful or prideful, we can confess our failure, seek forgiveness, make right the wrong we have done, and get back to keeping the commandment without stain or reproach.
  - c. The reality is, no human can do better than this. We ought to keep growing in godliness so that we fail less and less. And we ought to try our best to live as perfectly as Jesus did. But we will fail here and there. And the solution is to deal with our failure in a way that shows our sincerity in living a godly life as perfectly as is humanly possible.
4. There are two scriptures that affirm the extent to which we are to keep the commandment.
  - a. **1 Peter 1:14-16**, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy** yourselves also **in all your behavior**; [16] because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”
  - b. **Titus 2:11-14**, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, [13] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, [14] who gave Himself for us **to redeem us** from every lawless deed, and **to purify** for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”
5. In summary, God’s word exhorts us to fight the good fight of faith, to keep a firm grip on eternal life, to live a godly life to the end of our days on the earth, and to live this life in a way that is free of defect or deficiency, and free of anything that can rightfully be condemned as ungodly.

- a. Is this impossible? No! Why not? Because God makes it possible just as he made it possible for the Israelites to clear the Promised Land of its sinful inhabitants.
  - b. But, this process of growth comes with ongoing challenges, hard work, hard fought battles, some failures along the way, and the need to persevere to the end in order to gain the victory.
- E. In between and surrounding these three exhortations, Paul points out some marvelous and faith encouraging truths about God and Jesus Christ. Here is his list:
1. God gives life to all things.
  2. Christ Jesus, (*who showed us we can live a godly life even in the face of injustice, cruelty, and pain*) testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate.
  3. God will bring about Jesus' appearing at the proper time.
  4. God is the blessed and only Sovereign (*in total control and ruler over all that is*).
  5. God is the King of kings and Lord of lords (*He is the supreme ruler over kings and lords*).
  6. God alone possess immortality (*no beginning, no end – immortality is inherent in His nature while we have been given the ability to live forever after being born*).
  7. God dwells in unapproachable light (*perfectly holy*).
  8. No man has seen or can see God (**Exodus 33:20** “*But God said, ‘You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!’*” and yet, **Matthew 5:8** “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*”)

### III. Conclusion

- A. To God or our Lord Jesus be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.