

1 Timothy 6:11-16 **It's Vitally Important that you fight!**

Today we are going to discuss fighting. Now that I've got the attention of every young boy in the place, we better answer: When is fighting not only ok, but good? Our LORD says at the beginning of vs.12: "*Fight the **good** fight of the faith.*"

Who is involved in the fight? This letter was first written to Timothy, called here in v.11 a "person of God." (That's the literal Greek.) But he's not the only one whom these words were meant for. You see, you and Timothy have something in common. God has called you to faith in Jesus, just like he had done for Timothy. As in the case of Timothy, God has given you spiritual life and, along with it, eternal life. 1 Peter ch.2 assures all believers in Jesus Christ, "You are a chosen people, chosen by God, a people belonging to God" (vs.4 & 9). So the Holy Spirit wants you to hear these words, too. His instructions for you, O people of God, are useful and powerful. They are critically important.

Understand as soon as God's blessings were gifted to you, your Enemy began his assault on you. He attempts to battle your faith and your eternal life away from you. So whether you like it or not, you are in a fight. As a "person of God" you are the target of the devil.

Basically, you're in the fight *of your life*. Ignore that fact, and you place yourself in fatal danger (Eph.6:10f; 1 Peter 5:8f; James 4:7). How long will the fight last? We will only be through with the evil & the evil one that wars against us and our faith when we are safely standing on heavenly ground. So until that time, person of God, here is your God's instruction for you: **It's vitally important that you fight!**

We have here before us "Fight instructions" from God. There are 5 commands from God in this short section of verses. The central one is: **Fight the good fight of the faith**. Centered around that thought, let's take home God's encouragement and strength by identifying & discussing: **4 critical instructions for this fight**.

Fight Instruction #1: Run for your life

What? Run? I thought you said that we're supposed to fight! Running away in some instances is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of wisdom. See vs.11. Running is good, when it is commanded by God.

Think of it this way... we give our kids instructions like: "If you ever find yourself in a spot, where you recognize there is a threat - danger - from someone who is there by you, what should you do?" "Run, and call for help."

As a believer, when you recognize you're in spiritual danger, RUN (& call for help).

But we don't always feel like running. Our enemies sometimes come to us as "friends." "C'mon! Aren't you tired of the battle? Don't you need a break? Let your guard down a little and have some fun for once! Do something for yourself. Not for Him!" Our enemies in sheep's clothing nudge, then tug rather forcefully at your sinful nature, in attempt to pull you off your spiritually solid footing, which is: faith in Jesus Christ.

The Word of God is littered with examples of casualties in history: those who have listened to those velvety voices of danger and failed to run. We heard a case like that in vs.10: "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith." Run from all this!

Other situations even have the appearance, on the surface, of looking good and healthy for our souls. We love to hear mention of God in the conversations of life. Right? ... But who does the person mean by "God"? And does what they're saying really come from God? Are we being drawn in by what they're speaking?

☞ Look at the context of 1 & 2 Timothy, and you'll see: there are repeated references to the battle Timothy was having with people who were using the name of God & promoting false teachings along with it [1 Tim. 1:19-20, 4:1f, 6:3f. 2 Tim. 2:16f, 3:5f, 4:3f]. Paul's final encouragement in the book of 1 Timothy, this same chapter, is: "*Turn away from... what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.*" Turn away, and... Run from this!

Here is an important aspect of the good fight of faith: Run from the harmful forces that have the potential to knock you off your spiritually solid footing: which is Jesus.

If you get tired out from all this, the really comforting thing is... God never calls on us to dig deep within ourselves to find new strength to run or to fight. God equips & strengthens us for the fight. Run to his sources of strength. He speaks strength into you through his Word: He gives life and wisdom; He puts in your hand the double-edged sword of Truth to cut through false teachings. He refreshes you in your Baptism with the assurance of who you are – “Fear not, dear child. I have saved you. You are mine. Your conscience can rest: your sin is washed away by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” He offers you added comfort and strength in the Lord’s Supper: here take – here touch – hear eat & drink his body and blood given for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

These are also your source of power to resist the pull to simply give in to sin. So, fight the good fight of the faith, as you ... “run for your life from spiritual dangers.”

Fight Instruction #2: Pursue. *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance & gentleness.*

If you have an open space of land and if you don’t fill it with something good, weeds will infiltrate and grow up there. You see the spiritual point?

Fill your mind and time with what is good. This shows thanks to God, as you live out the truth and joy and love you have received from him. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. This list has been called an alphabet, or catalog, of Christian virtues.

As we look through the catalog, we admit we often have failed to pursue those good things. We express that in the confession of sins we say here: “I confess... the good I have failed to do.” We admit our need for Jesus as Savior.

Turning to His Word, we see Jesus brings us everything that is Good in our lives. He is the only one who kept every single command of God. He hit the target of God’s virtues: holiness, trust, love and service that God expects – that he requires. Then He wrapped it up in His life-blood, and gifted to us the cleansing and holiness. He has gifted us our identity: in Christ we are holy, dearly loved people of God.

His love, his gifts, create in us the heart (desire) to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Lord Jesus, help us all to join in saying: “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free” Psalm 119:32.

Interestingly enough, the verses just before and after that one in Psalm 119 state: “I *hold fast* to your words, O Lord... Teach me, O Lord... then I will *keep* your words to the end” Psalm 119:31,33. This is the topic of our 3rd and 4th fight instructions in 1 Tim. ch.6.

Fight instruction #3: Keep hold

In vs.12, “Take hold” seems better translated “Keep hold.” For those of you grammar geeks: The activity here has been described as “durative”; you hear the thought “enduring” in there. *Keep hold* on the eternal life that has been given to you.

Kids, help me illustrate this today.

☞ I have a treasure in my hand. Who would like to pull it out? [Hopefully, the child won’t be able to get it out.]

☞ Let’s have another volunteer work with him/her to snatch it away. Who wants to help? [They’ll get the treasure.] If I’m relying on my own strength to hold on, amidst ever increasing enemies, they’ll most likely be able to snatch away my treasure.

☞ But, what if I have something provided to me that has the strength to keep my grasp tight. Unroll and show the treasure is a tie down strap. Now, use it to secure hand shut around the treasure.

Fight the good fight of faith: keep hold upon your treasure. What is it, kids, that it is worth all that effort to keep hold of? It is “*the eternal life to which you were called,*” which God placed into your possession when he called you to faith in Jesus.

You definitely want to hold onto such a wonderful treasure, right??? And guess what? In this case, the very thing you're holding onto as the treasure gives you the strength to keep hold on it!!! Note with me the powerful, inspiring gospel phrases that God wraps us in today.

- ✠ You have “the eternal life to which God has called you”;
- ✠ “God, who gives life” – yes, He is the Life giver, which includes all types: physical, spiritual and eternal;
- ✠ “Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the LORD of Lords” – “He has immortality, life without end” - He testified to the life and the saving truth “before Pontius Pilate” – now we await “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” who died to save us and will return to give us the crown of life.

This is our treasure. And, this gives us the reason and the strength to keep our hold on it. So, don't mess around with the very thing that provides your strength. That leads us to the last instruction.

Fight instruction #4: Keep guard of God's Truth

You may see that vs. 14 says, “keep this command without spot or blame” in the NIV translation. However, the context here favors the meaning: “keep guard of all God's Word.” Don't change, discard, warp or pervert any of it.

I love the Greek verb used here, which means “to keep, to guard something.” When Paul wrote to Timothy the next book of the Bible, from all indications Paul was at the end of his life. He gives a personal statement of confidence. Listen to the words he uses: (2 Tim 4:7) “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have **kept** the faith.” He had **kept guard of** God's truth. Though the enemies of God's truth had taken Paul's freedom (Paul was imprisoned), they could not steal God's truth treasured in his heart. Paul then holds out the assurance: “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” 2 Tim 4:8.

That news right there... the Lord tells us: Keep guard of it!

Rev. 12:17 also uses this Greek verb “to keep guard of something.” If you have an NIV Bible open to that page in Revelation, you'll see the phrase: “those who obey God's commands.” But the context (like here in 1 Timothy 6) favors: “those who keep guard of all God's Word.” The fight we're in is described there too. Listen what we are up against:

- ✠ “The dragon [the devil] was enraged... and went off to make war against ... those who keep guard of God's words and who have the testimony of Jesus.”

What do you learn there? Be alert, but don't be afraid! For the One who is for you, is greater than the one who is against you. As you fight the good fight of the faith keep in mind: 1) God is your Champion/your strength for this task; **AND** 2) he himself is keeping and guarding you.

CONCLUSION: Yes, God guards and keeps us. Listen:

- ✠ John 17:11, 12, 15 – Jesus prays, “¹¹Holy Father, keep/protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. ... ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, ... ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect/guard them from the evil one.”

So ~ Trust in God to guard and keep of you. Rely on strength from God for the fight from the evil one and the evil that surrounds... Remember the fight instructions God has given us here: (let's review our fight instructions) 1) run (from spiritual danger), 2) pursue (whatever is good), 3) keep hold on (your treasure, eternal life in Christ), & 4) guard (God's truth). The Lord bless and keep you as you... Fight the good fight of the Faith!