

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

I Tim. 6:12

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Though spoken by Paul specifically to Timothy, I Tim. 6:12 applies to everyone of us:

I Tim. 6:12: *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”*

2. Make no mistake! We are spiritual soldiers, and, like it or not, we are fighting a spiritual conflict:

Eph. 6:12-13: *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

3. There’s nothing more I would like than if this weren’t so and the road to heaven was paved with rose petals, lilacs, little puppies and cute kittens, but it just isn’t so and we have to deal with it.
4. Thus, notice Paul’s statements in **2 Tim. 2:3-4:** *“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

A. Both the soldier in an earthly army and the “soldier of Jesus Christ” must “fight the good fight” and “endure hardship.”

B. The hardships of the earthly soldier are parallel to those of the Christian soldier:

- (1) Absolute submission to authority (**Jas. 4:7:** *“Therefore submit to God.”*; **2 Cor. 10:5:** *“bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”*),
- (2) Separation from loved ones and friends (**Matt. 10:35-37:** *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”*),
- (3) Personal deprivations (**Matt. 10:38:** *“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”*; **Phil. 3:8:** *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”*),
- (4) Physical suffering (2 Cor. 11:23-27: 5 times from the Jews Paul received 39 stripes, 3 times he was beaten w/rods, once he was stoned, 3 times was shipwrecked, etc.),
- (5) Torture from the enemy (**2 Tim. 3:12:** *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*; Acts 5:40-41),
- (6) Death (Rev. 2:10).

C. **3** In verse 4 Paul continues by saying, *“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

D. Paul’s words provide us with another point of comparison between a soldier and a Christian.

- (1) The emphasis is on wholehearted service, consider:

******“Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or to engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man’s estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was, that they were excluded from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which it was

thought would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit.” (from Barnes’ Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft).

- (2) This does not preclude us from engaging in secular work (Acts 18:3; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8).
- (3) Secular employment is not forbidden, but we must not become so entangled with it (or anything else in the world!) to the point it interferes with our service to the Lord!
5. ** The latter part of verse 4 (**2 Tim 2:4**: “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”) provides another point of comparison.
 - A. A soldier’s objective is not to perform his own will or execute his own plans, but to follow the orders, serve the will, and obtain the approval of his superior officers.
 - B. To be what he ought to be, a soldier must completely lose his will in service to a higher will.
 - C. And, the same is true of the Christian. We must do everything with a view to pleasing Christ (Col. 3:17; **Gal. 2:20**: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”).
6. **4** Let us look at what it means to “Fight the good fight of faith.”

I. DISCUSSION:

To “fight the good fight of faith” we...

1. **5** Must do something: Fight!

- A. Many Christians hide their heads in the sand refusing to recognize we’re at war! **Eph. 6:10-18**
- B. Who are we at war with? We are at war with the “wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). “wiles” = gr. *methodeia* (Vincent: “deliberate planning...Error organizes. It has its system and its logic.”) Therefore, we must not be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Notice also v. 12:
 - (1) “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood”: our battle is not in the carnal realm, but in the spiritual; therefore, we do not use carnal weapons, but spiritual weapons (**2 Cor. 10:3-5**: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”).
 - (2) This battle is against “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” I believe this ties in with the “wiles of the devil”. The two primary areas where Satan assaults us are:
 - (a) Fleshly lusts (**1 Pet. 2:11**: “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,”; Gal. 5:16-21: “works of the flesh”); we all have our fleshly weaknesses we must battle.
 - (b) Falsehood and error (**Matt. 7:15**: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”; Gal. 1:6-9; **Eph. 4:11, 14**: “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”). Some are so “delicate” they refuse to recognize that error is commonplace and dangerous!
- C. Therefore, we must be not “ignorant of his devices” but we must DO something!

- (1) We must acknowledge that error is commonplace: **1 Jn. 4:1**: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
- (2) But, false teachers don’t appear to be false teachers: **Matt. 7:15**: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”
- (3) We must “take up the whole armor of God” that we may steadfastly resist the devil (**1 Pet. 5:8-9**: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith,”; **Jas. 4:7-8a**: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”).
- (4) We must “test” the teaching of everyone to determine truth versus error (EVERYBODY including me!): **1 Jn. 4:1**: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”; **Acts 20:31**: “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”
- (5) We must “expose” error, we can never just let it pass or compromise with it! **Eph. 5:11**: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”; **2 Jn. 9-11**
- (6) We must take the “offensive”; we can’t wait for the fight to come to us (i.e., can’t wait until it comes to our front door; *Band of Brothers*).

To “fight the good fight of faith” we...

2. **6** Must realize we are fighting a “good fight”!

A. Paul describes our warfare as a “good fight” (1 Tim. 6:12) because:

- (1) It is the “worthiest” cause of all worthy causes:
 - (a) It is on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ (**2 Tim. 2:3**: “...endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”).
 - (b) What if you were called on a vital mission by the President? How serious would you take your mission? How good would you feel when you accomplished it successfully?
 - (c) We must take our “mission” for Christ even more serious for He is the captain of our salvation and He gives eternal life (**Heb. 2:10**: captain of our salvation; **9:15**: mediator; **1 Jn. 2:1**: advocate; **Jas. 1:12**: He will give us “the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”).
- (2) It is a stand for what is right:
 - (a) It is a stand with the Lord in the power of His might with His armor, not our might or armor! **Eph. 6:13-17** (**2 Pet. 1:5**: “add to your faith virtue”; explain virtue as motivation).
 - (b) It is both standing “with” the Lord, and standing “before” the Lord (**Mal. 3:2-3**: “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: 3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” KJV).

- (i) The Lord purifies and cleanses us when we walk with Him in His word (**1 Pet. 1:22**: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.”).
 - (ii) The Lord will test each of us as by fire (**1 Pet. 1:6-9**: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.”).
- (3) It glorifies God:
- (a) Our efforts as good soldiers are designed to bring glory to God (**1 Pet. 4:11-12**: “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”).
 - (b) If we truly fight the “good fight” we will glorify God in our “body” and in our “spirit” (**1 Cor. 6:19**: “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”; Medal of Honor).
 - (c) Just like the carnal soldier glorifying his country; our giving of glory to God in our “body” and in our “spirit” is “reasonable service” (**Rom. 12:1-2**: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”).

To “fight the good fight of faith” we must realize...

3. **7** It is a fight of faith!

- A. Faith is the motivating force behind our warfare (not carnal! 2 Cor. 10:3-5).
 - (1) We “walk by faith, not by sight”, (2 Cor. 5:7) “The just shall live by faith,” (Rom. 1:17) and fight by faith (**1 Tim. 6:12**: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.”).
 - (2) Paul’s faith in Christ enabled him to live a life of dedicated service (**Gal. 2:20**: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”).
 - (3) Our faith is what allows us to “tap into” the power of God (**Rom. 5:1-2**: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”; **Eph. 1:19-21**: “and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”).
- B. Faith gives us strength and courage to forge ahead despite how our prospects might appear from a human perspective (**Heb. 11:13-16, 32-40**).

- C. We need to take the example of these heroes of faith and run our race and fight our fight with patience and endurance (**Heb. 12:1-4**)
- D. It is only through faith that we can gain the victory (**1 Jn. 5:4**: “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.”; **Eph. 6:16**: “above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”; **Jude 20-21**: “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”).

To “fight the good fight of faith” we must realize...

4. 8 The purpose of our fight:

- A. In our text, Paul tells Timothy why he is to “Fight the good fight of faith.” It is so that he might “lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12).
- B. Thus, Timothy was to work toward the goal of receiving eternal life; the ultimate “Medal of Honor”!
- C. In the Scriptures “eternal life” or “everlasting life” is an expression that is used of both the present and the future, just as the terms “kingdom” and “saved” are used describing both the present and the future.
 - (1) Some passages speak of eternal life as future (**Titus 1:2**: “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,”; **Mk. 10:30**: “who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life.”).
 - (2) Some passages speak of eternal life as present possession (**Jn. 3:36**: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”; **Jn. 5:24**: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”; **1 Jn. 5:11-13**: “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”).
 - (3) There is no contradiction because eternal life is conditioned upon our continued obedience (Jas. 2:26; Heb. 5:9; **2 Tim. 4:7**: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”; **1 Cor. 9:27**: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”; **Heb. 3:14**: “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,”).
- D. Let us heed Paul’s encouragement to lay hold on eternal life, to gain the eternal reward.
 - (1) Remember, it is Jesus Christ who gives eternal life (Jn. 11:25-26; 14:6).
 - (a) In fact, Christ is eternal life (**1 Jn. 5:20**: “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”).
 - (b) We can share in what He is and what He has (**Phil. 3:17-21**; **1 Jn. 3:2-3**: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And

everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”; **Rom. 8:17**: “and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”).

(c) We receive our “share” by patient continuance in well doing (**Rom. 2:7**: “eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;”).

(2) Paul did not consider himself as already saved (“once saved, always saved”), but he pressed toward the goal (**Phil. 3:13-14**: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”).

III. CONCLUSION: 9

1. Are you a “good soldiers of Jesus Christ”? (2 Tim. 2:3)
2. This, by an unknown author, is entitled, “I Am a Soldier.”

10 I am a soldier in the army of my God. The Lord Jesus Christ is my commanding officer. The Holy Bible is my code of conduct. Faith, prayer, and the Word are my weapons of warfare. I have been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity, and tested by fire. I am a volunteer in this army, and I am enlisted for eternity.

11 I will either retire in this army at the end of time, or die in it; but I will not get out, sell out, be talked out, or pushed out. I am faithful, reliable, capable, and dependable. If my God needs me, I am there. If He needs me to teach a class, to teach my neighbor, to help someone in need, or just to sit and learn, He can use me because I am there! I am a soldier. I am not a baby. I do not need to be pampered, petted, primed up, pumped up, picked up, or pepped up.

12 I am a soldier. No one has to call me, remind me, write me, visit me, entice me, or lure me. I am not a wimp. I am in place, saluting my King, obeying His orders, praising His name, and building His kingdom. No one has to send me flowers, gifts, food, cards, candy, or give me handouts. I do not need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for, or catered to.

13 I am committed. I cannot have my feelings hurt bad enough to turn me around. I cannot be discouraged enough to turn me aside. I cannot lose enough to cause me to quit. When Jesus called me into this army, I had nothing materially. If I end up with nothing, I will still come out ahead. I will win spiritually. My God has supplied my needs, and will continue to supply all of my needs.

14 I am more than a conqueror. I will always triumph. I can do all things through Christ. Devils cannot defeat me. People cannot disillusion me. Weather cannot weary me. Sickness cannot stop me. Battles cannot beat me. Money cannot buy me. Governments cannot silence me, and hell cannot handle me, because I’m safe in my Savior.

15 I am a soldier. Even death cannot destroy me. For when my commander calls me from this battlefield, He will promote me, and then allow me to rule with Him. I am a soldier in the army, and I’m marching, claiming victory. I will not give up. I will not turn around. I am a soldier, and I am heaven bound, and here I stand! Will you stand with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

Adapted from an original sermon by David J. Riggs