

September 29, 2021

## Topic 19: Overcoming *The Ongoing Battle with Sin and Temptation*

*"Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."*

1 Timothy 6:12



### Summary of the Text

When we think of the term, *fight*, our minds go to a physical battle with fists raised to inflict blows and a stance that is ready to take punches should any get past our defenses.

**Fight** has a metaphorical meaning, "to contend, perseveringly against opposition and temptation."

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul tells us the battle is not waged in the physical sense. It is instead engaged in the spiritual realm, unseen by us but nonetheless real and, therefore, felt.

**Good** is defined as excellent in its nature and characteristics, praiseworthy, noble.

The second *fight* in the passage is a noun meaning a contest or conflict. And "of the faith" is an oh, so important phrase. It is a conviction of the truth. Faith is what it takes to please God, and He gives us everything we need to live a life full of faith! David said in Psalm 144:1, "Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle." The entire psalm speaks of God being – among myriad other roles – our "shield and fortress, high tower and deliverer."

The Message Bible paraphrases 1 Timothy 6:12 as, "But you, Timothy, man of God: Run for your life from all this. Pursue a righteous life – a life of wonder, faith, love, steadiness, courtesy. Run hard and fast in the faith." A quick look at this verse affords a few more nuggets of wisdom.

## Looking at the You and me of the matter

In his book *Learning from the Giants*, John C. Maxwell observed that “Disappointment comes when reality falls short of our expectations.” At one time or another, every Christian ends up *disappointed*. This is because we often get it in our heads that following Jesus is going to lead to a certain outcome . . . but then life, reality and/or God don’t cooperate.

Examine the idea of spiritual disappointment – the everyday seemingly spiritual reality not living up to our spiritual expectations. And the struggle we all experience as a result of this disappointment.

### Great expectations

**Note the statements that express any of the spiritual expectations you’ve had or have.**

- If I humbly ask God to forgive my sins, he will.
- Turning to Jesus is the quickest, surest way to fix my problems.
- God will always be with me, always love me, always approve of what I do.
- If I pray hard enough God might “touch me” and take away sinful desires or bad habits.
- If I tack the expression “in Jesus’ name, amen” to the end of my prayers, God is obligated to give me whatever I’ve asked for.
- I should always expect to “sense” or “feel” God’s presence in my life.
- A devoted Christian should never and will never get depressed.
- If I follow certain principles or parenting techniques my kids will never turn away from God.
- If I have enough faith I can enjoy a life of continual physical health and financial prosperity.
- The gospel and followers of Christ will always be honored in our culture.
- There are certain sins that I would *never* commit.
- I can mature in my faith, in this life, to the point that I will no longer be tempted by certain sins.
- I can be wholeheartedly devoted to Christ and be liked and admired and accepted by everyone.
- The spiritual life is going to be an exhausting race and a brutal battle.

## Spiritual Realities According to the Word

### What do these passages reveal about struggles?

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9 NLT).

“For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:19 NLT).

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that sufferings produce endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-4, ESV).

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure” (1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT).

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV).

“For our struggles are not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this corrupt world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12, NLT).

“Be sober in spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NASB).

“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NLT).

“Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11 NLT).

## The spiritual reality of the spiritual life

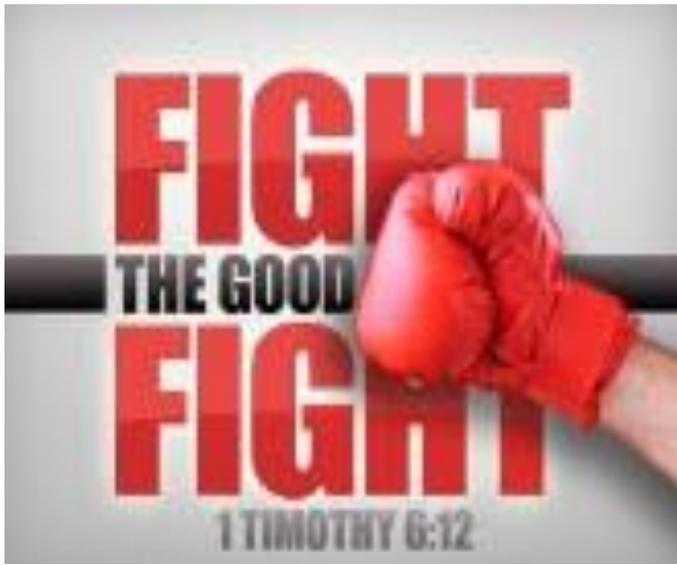
***Life is Hard***

***We will grow spiritually, but we will never arrive at perfection this side of heaven***

**We should expect to face trials**

# How Can We Fight the Good Fight if We Have No Fight Left?

No fight left? The best practice to undertake starts on your knees – even on your face – before the Lord. You may want to pray Scripture back to Him as you cry out for help. Ephesians 6:10-18 helps us as we cover ourselves with the full armor of God.



It's easy for us to think we must do the fighting. After all, we are equipped with our spiritual armor. But that armor is secured for us by the Lord Jesus Christ and, as such, He who fights for us through our faith. Exodus 14:14 says, *"The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."* Since all of the Bible is useful for "training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16-17), we can rely on that promise stated in Exodus.

Further, Deuteronomy 1:30 reminds us, *"The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes."* He was speaking here of going into the land of the Canaanites, yet we go into a battleground of the

world every day. God moves through the hearts and minds of all people to accomplish His purposes. He fights for us if we come to Him in faith and submit to His will in our lives. *"Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for battle and my fingers for war"* (Psalm 144:1).

Remember this truth when your faith wavers and you are tempted to give up, because God will "never leave us nor forsake us" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

## Some things to consider

**Wrestle with these matters:**

- ❖ What has this lesson helped you see differently about following Jesus?
- ❖ What specific spiritual battles are most fierce in your life right now – fighting envy, lust, or doubt; trying to develop healthy spiritual habits, etc.?