

Fight the Good Fight • 1 Timothy 6:11-21

I. INTRO

A. Read Vs. 11-16

1. “Fight the good fight of faith.”
2. If you’ve seen my office, you may suspect I’ve been looking forward to this passage.

B. Last Study in 1 Timothy

1. In our last study in 1 Tim, we found instructions Paul gave his young assistant who he’d left in Ephesus to deal with some problems.
2. The biggest challenge Timothy faced was some elders who’d been gone off into serious error.
3. Tim had to go toe to toe with these guys & call them to either repent or beat it.
4. But Timothy was not one who enjoyed confrontation. He was a gentle soul, so Paul called him to step up & use the authority God gave him as a pastor.
5. Most of Paul’s guidance so far has been for Timothy in **dealing with others**. Now he speaks to Tim **directly**.
6. Picture the coach of a football team, speaking to the team in the locker room at half time.
 - a. The score is tied but the team hasn’t been playing to their potential.
 - b. The coach knows his team can win if they’ll step it up & give it what he knows they’re capable of.
 - c. This is the championship game. Now is the time to pull out all the stops.
 - d. That’s Paul mode in these verses.

C. Men Needed

1. While this applies to **all believers**, it’s especially **for men**, because Paul addresses this **to Timothy**.
2. And while this applies to **all men**, it speaks with special force to **young men**, as Timothy was.
3. This ought to encourage us older men. But one thing we can do with this passage is to call the younger men in our lives to heed what Paul says here.
4. And ladies—Understand **the importance of men being men** as God designed them.
5. This world, in rebellion against God, seeks to twist the truth at every turn.
6. One of the main ways it’s done so throughout the ages is to distort what it means to be a man.
 - a. For generations, the lie made **men into brutes** who abused women. They took **advantage** of them, instead of **Rescuing & Protecting** them.
 - b. But now, the modern era has done a 180 & swung totally in the other direction. Men have been turned into **weak & pathetic little boys** who dress & act more like women than men.
7. What God means by a Man is neither brute nor sexless wimp. God means man to be a **hero**.
 - a. Someone who defends what’s right & resists what’s wrong, **& will do so with his life**.
 - b. God means a Man to be, as one author says – a **Tender Warrior**.

II. TEXT

A. V. 11

¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Man of God

1. Timothy had been Paul’s faithful assistant for years.
2. But Paul knew his life & ministry were winding down & Tim would soon be on his own.
3. While it was the plan to meet up in Ephesus, Paul didn’t know when that would be or **IF** it would be.
4. And indeed, 2nd Timothy, written shortly after this, was Paul’s **last** letter.
5. This is where he passes the torch to Tim. He does so, not by calling Tim his “son” as he does in other places. He calls him – “**Man of God**.”
 - a. This is the only time this is applied to an individual in the NT, & it’s used of Timothy.
 - b. In the OT it used for the greats – **Moses**, a few of the **judges, Elijah & Elisha**.
 - c. Paul knew how special the title was & applied it to Timothy.
6. What a great title – **Man of God!** Men, **that’s** what you want to aspire to.
 - a. Today, when you want to compliment a guy you say, “You da’ man.”
 - b. Let’s edit that by faith & change it to, “You da’ Man of God.”
7. Timothy’s is no longer living in Paul’s shadow. He’s still Paul’s spiritual son, but he’s matured into a man God wants to use in a **mighty** way in Ephesus.

8. You young men, you teens who've grown up in church & gone for years because it was the "family thing" – it's time to move out from your parent's shadow & become a Man of God in your own right.
- It's ***your time now***; time to step into a walk with God that's your own.
 - It's time to find your vocation & get to work.
 - It's time to find where God wants you to serve & get to it.

Flee / Pursue

9. Then Paul says -

... flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

- "These things" are the sins we looked at last week in vs. 3-10 – all the evil that follows ***greed***.
 - Timothy must make sure his heart stays pure, unsullied by the lie that this world can satisfy.
 - Now The best way to avoid sin isn't by pledging ***not to do*** something.
 - In all honesty, "Just saying 'No!'" doesn't work. The "No!" has to be replaced with a ***bigger, "YES!!"***
 - We say No to sin by saying **YES** to God.
 - As we saw last week, lust & greed are all attempts at finding significance & satisfaction in things.
 - But it doesn't work because we were created for God.
 - It's only when we give ourselves to Him thru faith in Christ we find what we're looking for.
10. A man ***becomes*** a Man of God when he understands the battle with temptation is won, not just by NOT sinning, but by **DOING** good.
- He aims at being & doing what's right. // He's ***devoted*** to God.
 - He believes & loves God. And all that spills over into the way he treats others.
11. We're all very tired of guys who ***think*** they're men of God because they go to church, drag the family w/them; sing the songs, carry a big Bible, glad-hand a half dozen people, smile as though everything's grand, but act like the devil at home.
12. Men, don't do that! You're souring your kids to God. You're making them think adults are frauds.
- If you've been a hypocrite, you need to confess, repent, & ask both God ***& your family*** to forgive you.
 - Humble yourself before them. A Man of God ***is*** humble.

B. V. 12

- The last thing Paul tells Tim to go after in v. 11 is gentleness.
- He needs to be gentle with ***people***. But there's ***another sphere*** of life where Tim needs to be a ***warrior***. So he says -

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.

- The scrap Tim is called to is the age-old conflict between God & Satan, good & evil.
 - This is the **real World War**; the long one WW's I & II were just manifestations of.
 - Before we come to faith in Christ, we're allies of the devil.
 - But once we're born-again, we become part of the Army of God.
 - Which do you want to be a ***victim or victor***?
 - Too many Christians cower in fear, identifying as victims.
 - As we walk by Faith, in the Spirit, we are ***victors by God's grace***.
 - We can inflict damage on the enemy instead of becoming a casualty.
- Paul tells Timothy, literally, "**Keep on fighting the GOOD fight of faith!**"
 - The battle ***never lets up***. The adversary is relentless.
 - There may be ***lulls in the intensity*** of battle – but know this; the devil uses times of ***seeming*** peace to fool us into thinking the fighting's over.
 - No – he's just redeploying his assets to attack from another direction.
- This isn't just a metaphor. ***The War is real***.
 - In Eph. 6 Paul speaks of the spiritual armor God gives so we can prevail.
 - In 2 Cor. 10 we read–

³ 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.

6. If you've been a Christian for a while, you know the battle with evil is real & intense.
7. Take note of Paul's words here. He calls Timothy, not to become a spiritual pacifist. ***He's to fight!***
 - a. His conflict is not with flesh & blood. It's a ***spiritual*** contest.
 - b. His battle is w/evil, w/temptation, deception, injustice – w/anything contrary to God.
8. Paul calls this ***The GOOD Fight!***
 - a. Men – Part of what God created us to be is a ***warrior***. Doing battle is part of our design.
 - b. We're created in the image of God, right? Well, Ex. 15:3 says,

The Lord is a ***Warrior***, the LORD [Yahweh] is His name.

- d. Man was originally designed to bear this aspect of God's character.
 - e. Sin mangled it & turned men into brutes who use violence to selfish ends.
 - f. But originally, God intended a man to be a Champion for Righteousness, going against evil & rescuing the endangered.
9. Coming to & following Jesus means ***getting back into the fight on the right side!***
 - a. Because we were created for this, we need to alter our thinking about spiritual warfare.
 - b. Too often, we hear is guys whining & complaining about “how ***hard*** it is.”
 - c. Too many men ***run from*** spiritual conflict, they ***run from*** battle.
 - d. Is that what Paul says here? “***Run away from*** the good fight?”
 - e. No. He says “***Flee sin*** but ***pursue righteousness. Fight!*** Get in there & mix it up because we are more than conquerors thru Christ Who loves us.”
 - f. Some guy will say, “I'm a lover, not a fighter.” // Well, if you ***really*** love, you'll fight.
 - 1) A guy who loves his wife will fight to protect her if she's in danger.
 - 2) The guy who loves his kids will defend them when they're imperiled.
 - 3) A man who loves God will fight for truth.
 - 4) The man who loves his church will fight for it.
 - 5) Satan wants to destroy all that's good, true & beautiful. He's gone to war ***against*** them. We have to fight ***for*** them.
 - g. I'm reading *Band of Brothers*. The author interviewed dozens of men who fought in WWII.
 - 1) To a man they all said what they hated was ***the waiting***.
 - 2) War is long periods of total boredom punctuated by moments of extreme violence.
 - 3) The hard part for seasoned soldiers isn't fighting; it's ***waiting*** for the fighting to begin.
 - 4) Once it starts, it's a ***relief*** & most said in the midst of battle, a kind of peace settles over them, knowing they have a job to do.
 10. That's ***exactly*** our situation. ***We are at War***. The battle is raging all around us.
 - a. We can't cower in our foxhole while our brothers & sisters & innocent children are all around us being blown to pieces.
 - b. We need to get up, get out of our hole & pour it on the enemy.
 - c. Because the fact is – The outcome of the War is already decided. ***Jesus wins!***
 - d. What we're doing is simply mopping up & enforcing the Lord's victory.
 11. Now – here's the deal: Just as Paul told his young assistant ***Timothy*** to fight the Good Fight, it's the ***young men*** who have the main charge to get into the game & fight!
 - a. In 1 John 2, John wrote to 3 groups; those who are spiritual children, old men & young men. To the ***young men*** he says –

¹³ - I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. ... ¹⁴ - I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

12. We're all employed in spiritual warfare, but it's especially the task of young men to embrace their role to be Warriors for the Lord.
 - a. The ***reason*** is because it's the ***young*** men who steer the course of a nation.
 - b. They're the ***husbands & fathers***; the ***leaders*** of their families.
 - c. They're the ones working the most effectively in the marketplace.
 - d. Think about who's driving our culture today. It's young men.
13. Men – Be the ***priest, prophet & king*** in your home.
 - a. Be the ***priest*** – be a leader in the things of God. Your wife shouldn't be the one who sets the spiritual temperature, that's your job.

- b. Be the **prophet** to your family. You be the one who shares & implements God's Word.
- c. Be the **king** at home; not wearing a crown from Burger King, demanding everyone bow down to you.

A **good king serves**. // He **protects & provides**.

14. So Mister – If you're married –

- a. How's your **wife** doing? Is she happy & growing in the Lord? It's your responsibility as a Man to provide the environment for that.
- b. How are your **kids** doing? Do they know you **love** them? **Spend time** with them.
 - 1) Date your daughter. Show her how a man is supposed to treat a woman so she'll be able to sort thru the jerks later.
 - 2) Do manly things w/your son & teach him how to be a man, not just a selfish punk in a man's body.

¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, ...

15. Eternal life doesn't begin after we die. It begins the moment we're born again. Take hold of it – NOW!

C. Vs. 13-16

1. Because of what Paul writes next I believe he sensed his days were drawing down & Tim would soon be on his own.

¹³ I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate [Supreme Ruler], the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.

2. Paul based his charge to Tim to fight the good fight on the awesome reality of Who it was both of them were living for **Jesus the Christ**.

- a. The Supreme Sovereign. The King who rules over all kings. The Master of all lords.
- b. The eternal God whose glory is so great no mortal can see Him & survive.

3. JRR Tolkien was a believer who used many truths from the Bible in writing LotR.

- a. So he has **Strider**, a mangy Ranger who meets up w/Frodo & his friends & leads them to safety.
- b. At first the Hobbits know Strider's real name is **Aragorn**, the rightful king of **all** Middle Earth.
- c. They're suspicious of the dark stranger everyone shuns.
- d. But as they get to know him better, they start to see him differently.
- e. Though they eventually learn his name & identity, they still don't realize how majestic & powerful he is
- f. **Until** the **end** of the story, when evil is finally vanquished & Aragorn receives his crown & takes his long-awaited bride.
- g. Then, with tens of thousands bowing to him, they **finally realize** their friend **is** the High King.

4. The Son of God came as the man we know as Jesus. Most did not recognize Him; in fact, they despised & crucified Him.

- a. But He revealed Himself to us & we became His followers. Now we bear the stigma of being associated with Him.
- b. But one day soon, the devil will be thrown down, & Jesus will receive the Kingdom.
- c. He will take His bride & all the world will see His glory.
- d. Every knee will bow & every tongue will proclaim Him "Lord."
- e. And we will say, "Neener, neener, neener – Told you so!"

D. Last Words – Vs. 17-21

1. Paul wraps it up.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

2. Those who achieve worldly success can easily become proud.

3. So Paul tells Timothy to caution wealthy believers.

4. Instead of becoming arrogant, they ought to give thanks to God as the source of their blessing.

¹⁸ Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

5. The wealthy must **use** their wealth **faithfully**. God gave it to them, not so they'd use it selfishly, but to bless others.

²⁰ O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— ²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

6. What had been committed to Tim's trust was the leadership of the Ephesian church.

a. Paul calls him to stay true to his task & not allow the persuasive but deceptive words of the false teachers to distract him.

b. They claimed a superior form of knowledge – a deeper level of understanding & enlightenment.

c. Paul calls it for what it is – a distraction.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Command

1. As we end, there's a word I want to ask you to take note of in v. 17 – "**Command**."

2. In this anti-authoritarian age, many people, Christians even, don't like that word.

3. **Command**? Surely in Greek it means '**suggest**.' No – It means **to announce what must be done**.

4. God doesn't give us **suggestions**. They're not the 10 Recommendations. They're Commandments.

5. God doesn't invite us to sit down & have a **dialog** w/Him about how to live.

a. We don't counsel or give advice to Jesus.

b. As Mark Driscoll says, it's not a dialog; it's **monolog & repentance**. // He directs, we obey.

6. What we need to remember is Who God **is**; our loving **Father**.

7. As a dad, there was a time w/each of my kids when I had to have a talk w/them about why I **tell** them what to do; why I give certain commands & why they need to obey.

a. Humans are little rebels & in every child's life there comes a point when that rebellion comes out.

b. It happens at different ages but it's most obvious between 6-9 years old.

c. And by then they're old enough to understand that obedience to mom & dad is the wisest course.

d. So when they're showing that rebellious attitude, I sit them down & say,

1) Who am I? -- Dad. // Do I love you? – Yeah.

2) When I tell you to do something is it because it's bad or good for you? – Good.

3) So when you disobey, is that good or bad? – Bad.

4) Why do I tell you to do something? – Because you're my dad & you love me.

8. Is God our Heavenly Dad? // Does He love us? // Does He want the best for us?

When He tells us to do a thing, is it because He wants to bless or harm us?

When we disobey, is that smart?