

# Fight the Good Fight of Faith – Part 3

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul encourages Timothy to fight the good fight of faith to the glory of God
2. aim – to cause us to fight for godliness, to make the good confession, until the coming of Christ
3. passage – 1 Timothy 6:11-16

### b. outline

1. The Fight for Eternal Life (1 Timothy 6:11-12)
2. The Fight for the Good Confession (1 Timothy 6:13-14a)
3. The Fight for Endurance to Glory (1 Timothy 6:14b-16)

### c. opening

1. the **reality** being placed upon Timothy (and all like him) in **1 Tim. 6:11ff**
  - a. **key phrase (title):** “fight the good fight of the faith” (v. 12)
    1. the New Testament message of the Gospel teaches that our trust in Christ **launches us** into a life of *fighting* to hold on to the assurances of God, even as our *flesh* fights against us
  - b. **principle: faith is not some passive sense of salvation, but a fight to hold on to the very life God has granted us in Christ that lasts from now into eternity**
    1. we are *expected* to flee worldly desires and passions, that bring enslavement and apostasy
    2. we are *expected* to pursue godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness in all things
    3. we are *expected* to fight the forces that threaten to knock us down and take away the prize
    4. we are *expected* to make the good confession, in the face of doubt or danger or temptation
    5. **question:** so, for *how long* are we to maintain this fight? – Paul gives an answer, but it may not be what you *think* it is!

## III. The Fight for Endurance to Glory (1 Timothy 6:14b-16)

### Content

#### a. the moment of endurance (v. 14b)

1. in **v. 14a**, Paul (first) gives the expectation of this paragraph: to “keep the commandment unstained” is simply a rehearsal of the action words of **vv. 11-13 (see above)**
2. in **v. 14b**, Paul (then) tells how *long* he expects Timothy to “keep the commandment unstained”:
  - a. “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” = until the promised return of Jesus (**the Parousia**)
  - b. **note:** there is some evidence in the N.T. that Paul et. al. expected Jesus to return *in their lifetimes*
    1. the teachings of Jesus re: his return *seemed* to hint at imminence (**Matthew 24:42-44**)  
 “Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”
    2. the address by Paul of a concern that the Lord may be tarrying too long (**1 Thess. 4:17**)  
 “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ...”
    3. **IOW:** it is *possible* (but not *probable* by the time of **1 Tim.**) that Paul believed that the fight of the faith would simply have to continue in the church *for a short while*, until Christ returned
- c. **but:** it is **now obvious** that the Lord *did not* return during the life of Paul, and is (even) *unlikely* to return in our own (**statistically speaking**)
  1. contra the many *dispensationalists* who have been attempting to “predict” the event, in *direct* violation of the wishes and realities of Jesus himself in **Matthew 24:36**
  2. **what we should now understand from this phrase is that the good fight of the faith continues in the church, by its members, all the way until the end of the age**
    - a. this is *not just* an instruction for individual Christians to fight the fight, it is *also* an imperative to the church as a *body* to press each successive generation forward in godliness and holiness, putting this good fight of the faith at the *center of the life of the church*
      1. **e.g.** holding a vision of worship & preaching that is consistent with the apostolic example
      2. **e.g.** keeping discipline and accountability at the forefront of the vision of the church
      3. **e.g.** passing on the *substance* of the faith to the next generation **through catechism**
    - b. **IOW:** Paul commands *the church* (through Timothy) to hold on to orthodoxy and orthopraxy and orthopathy *through time* all the way until Christ comes back to claim his people

- d. **also:** the phrase carries the connotation of a “continuation” from this life into eternity
1. **remember:** from the apostolic perspective, *eternal life* does not “begin” at death, but at *conversion* – we *begin* to live the life of Christ and have all of the blessings “*in the heavenly places*” (**Eph. 1:3**) immediately upon our response of repentance and faith in Christ
  2. so, the **impetus** for us to fight this good fight, to keep making the “*good confession*,” is that we are *already seen* by God in the light of eternity (**e.g.** Paul uses “*glorified*” in the *past tense* in **Romans 8:30**) – **i.e. the mystical union**
  3. our goal in life *now* should be a conformity to the “*image of Christ*” (**i.e.** his example of sinlessness, discipline, self-denial, prayer, commitment, etc.) that long *preceded us and will characterize him (and us) long after this age has passed*
- b. the goal of endurance (vv. 15-16)**
1. the good fight in anticipation of the “*display*” of Christ “*at the proper time*” (**v. 15a**)
    - a. **note:** there are a number of competing “theories” as to how and when Jesus will return
      1. dispensationalism vs. amillennialism vs. postmillennialism vs. preterism, etc.
      2. however, what all of these systems agree on (and the Confessions state) is:
        - a. that Christ *will* (one day) return *physically*, that a resurrection of the dead will occur, that Christ will judge all men according to their deeds (with the elect’s deeds demonstrating their love for him), and that the everlasting kingdom of Christ will be established upon the earth
      3. **IOW:** although Christians have disagreed down through the ages about *how* and *when* Christ will return, the church has long held these fundamental beliefs at its core
    - b. the reappearing of Jesus to judge the world and establish his kingdom is:
      1. predetermined – God has “set the date” of this return, just as he has established everything else in time according to the counsel of his decree (**i.e.** at the “*proper time*”)
      2. certain – the return of Christ is utterly certain, even though it may be “delayed” *from our perspective* (**i.e.** it may seem “far off” as circumstances “crowd out” its focus)
      3. powerful – the return of Christ will complete all things in time and space and *consummate* the kingdom of Christ upon the earth (**i.e.** it will complete the good fight of the faith)
    - c. **principle: the good fight of the faith is fought with the vision of Christ’s return in mind – we must keep the good confession and be found faithful in anticipation that Christ may suddenly appear (see Matthew 24:42-44 above)**
  2. the good fight before the very nature of God himself (**vv. 15b-16**)
    - a. **note:** the pronoun “*he*” (**x2**) in **v. 15** is *probably* Paul’s picture of Yahweh in a *Trinitarian* fashion
      1. the Father (**e.g.** “*Sovereign*”, “*unapproachable light*”, “*ever seen or can [be] seen*”)
      2. the Son (**e.g.** “*the blessed*”, “*King of Kings*”, “*Lord of Lords*” [**note Rev. 19:16**])
      3. **IOW:** Paul paints a picture of God here as a *complete union* of all of the Persons of the Godhead, sharing together the nature of divinity *as it is revealed to us and stands over us*
    - b. this is a **high view of God** that is the *foundation* of our good fight of the faith (**reformed theology**):
      1. one who is “*the blessed*” = the fortunate or happy one; the one who has an *intrinsic nature* of completeness or satisfaction; God as *utterly complete and satisfied in himself*
      2. one who is “*the only Sovereign*” = the ruler; the one who determines all that is or will be; the one who establishes all things; God as *the singular sovereign ruler over all that is*
      3. one who is “*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*” = the *final* ruler; the one who stands over *all other authorities*; God as *the potentate who has no equal among the “authorities” on earth*
      4. one who “*alone has immortality*” = the only self-existent, self-sufficient, self-determining being in all the universe; God as *utterly independent of everything outside of himself*
      5. one who “*dwells in unapproachable light*” = the one of absolute truth and glory; the one whose nature is so holy that it cannot be approached by mere creatures; God as *utterly perfect*
      6. one who “*no one has ever seen or can see*” = the one is “beyond” the senses; the one whose nature is *transcendent*; God as *utterly beyond our senses or our imaginations*
    - c. the response of *doxology* – “*To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*” (**see also 1:17**)
      1. **doxology** = to express (logia) the glory of God (doxa); to burst out in praise of God by **confessing** that which rightly belongs to him (**i.e.** honor and eternal dominion)
      2. a high view of God is one that turns *away from self* (and the “small” issues of our lives) to the *utter greatness of God* – a view of God where *he* is more important than *us!*

- d. **principle: the good fight of the faith is fought with our complete attention upon the *utter glory of God*, and not on the “smallness” of that which would threaten us**
  - 1. God is great enough to overcome our worldly desires and passions
  - 2. God is great enough to fill us with godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness
  - 3. God is great enough to neuter the forces that threaten to knock us down and remove the prize
  - 4. God is great enough to strengthen our good confession in the face of doubt or danger
  - 5. God is great enough to hold us fast to himself until the coming of Christ, whenever that will be
- 3. **reality: the good fight of the faith is actually a fight being waged by Christ himself in us, as the Spirit of God uses the Word and the church to sanctify every true believer into the image of Jesus in anticipation of the day when he consummates his kingdom to the glory of God**
  - a. therefore, we “*flee*”, “*pursue*”, “*take hold of*”, and “*make the good confession*” in the power of Christ
  - b. **so, let us keep our eyes upon this Christ in all things, as we fight the good fight of the faith, taking hold of the eternal life that is ours now and forevermore**