

# Fight the Good Fight of Faith – Part 2

## 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. **note: Miss Norma has finished her fight**
    2. 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
    3. **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**
  - b. Paul gets very *personal* with Timothy (v. 11), and sets some *very high* expectations of him
    1. Paul **expects** Timothy to “flee” and “pursue” and “fight” and “take hold of”
    2. even calling down an *oath* and a *doxology* to drive home his point (vv. 13-16)

## II. The Fight for the Good Confession (1 Timothy 6:13-14a)

### Content

#### a. the call of the gospel (v. 12a)

1. **here:** Paul implies the **metaphor of a fighter** – to wage battle against the forces that have the *potential* to knock you down and take away your prize (e.g. a prize-fighter)
  - a. “take hold of” = grasp; arrest; trap; catch; lit. be concerned for; battle against those things that would threaten to “wrestle away” from you what you possess
  - b. “the eternal life” = the goal of faith; the life that *begins* at an initial confession of faith, but *continues* through this *earthly existence* into eternity, into the presence of God himself
  - c. “called” = the action of God, by his Spirit and through his Word, to draw people to faith in Christ
    1. the gospel call is an **gracious call** – it is a choice of God to transform the *heart* of an individual from one of rebellion and hatred to one of love and submission
    2. the gospel call is an **effectual call** – the message of the gospel that lands upon the new heart will cause a reaction of repentance towards sin and a true faith (trust) in Christ for salvation
    3. the gospel call is an **eternal call** – the response of faith in the converted continues as a new desire to pursue an outward righteousness that is consistent with a new inward justification
    4. **IOW:** this eternal life that we are to “take hold of” is simply the *results* of our conversion – we are to “take hold of” the assurance that what God has done is complete (i.e. eternal)
2. **question:** how (exactly) do we “take hold of” this assurance? what does it mean to grasp a confidence in having “eternal life?” what do we **do** to find true assurance, in spite of our natural tendency to question our eternal state due to the *continuing* reality of sin in us?
  - a. **Paul now gives an answer to this \$64,000-question ... what you have confessed to be true, in a public sense, you must now continue to confess, in a truly public sense**

#### b. the charge to a good confession (vv. 12b-14a)

1. **key phrase:** “the good confession” (see also v. 13) = an acknowledgement of something as true, such that it *affects one’s existence*; a profession of truth that results in *real, existential realities*
  - a. contra the modern idea of making a “profession of faith” – typically, nothing more than an *ascent* to a set of “facts” (i.e. I am a sinner, Jesus died for me, if I profess my faith in him, I will go to heaven, etc.), but with little *existential* reality flowing from it – i.e. **with few expectations**
    1. **e.g.** rarely any threat that such a profession will have danger associated with it *because it doesn’t genuinely change one’s life, making one “opposite” to the ways of the world*

- b. Paul gives an *example* of the good confession in **v. 13** – the confession of Jesus before Pilate (**John 18:33-38**)
1. **note:** I insert this example here to help *define* the concept of a “good confession” – we will return to the flow of the argument in the text momentarily ...
  2. **note:** this is the only reference to Pilate in any of the N.T. epistles (Pauline or not); the only *other* mention of Pilate by Paul is in his soliloquy before the Jerusalem Council in **Acts 13:28**
  3. **note:** both the Apostle’s and Nicene Creeds mention Pontius Pilate – it is *remotely possible* that the inclusion of Pilate in those confessions finds its genesis here (**i.e. as confessions of belief** adopted by the church *in concert* with the confession of Jesus himself)
  4. the Synoptics give only one short snippet of Jesus’ interaction with Pilate (“*you have said so*” in response to Pilate’s “*are you King of the Jews?*”) – the Fourth Gospel is more *verbose*:
    - a. Pilate’s initial question: are you the King of the Jews? – Jesus answers with a question: are you asking this because *you* want to know, or simply as an exercise in *politics*?
    - b. Pilate’s response is: *I’m not a Jew; they handed you over to me*. So, what is it exactly that you have done (**i.e.** that warrants my attention as a *politician* and a *ruler*)?
    - c. Jesus’ reply is: *my kingdom is not of this world*; if it was, my followers would be fighting to set me free (**i.e.** you [Pilate] have nothing to fear *politically* from my appearance here)
    - d. Pilate follows up his original question: so ... you *are* a king, then?
    - e. Jesus makes his **great confession** in reply: as you say, I am a king – I came into this world to bear witness to the *truth* (**i.e.** the truth that I am the king of a kingdom greater than yours); all who belong to my kingdom *listen* to me (**i.e.** you *don’t* because you don’t belong)
    - f. Pilate resigns himself with: what is truth? – who can really understand any of these “spiritual” matters anyway (**i.e.** the *exact* response from a man “outside” of the kingdom of Christ)
  5. so, the “good confession” of Jesus is his admission, *publicly and with real, existential danger*, of his position as the king of heaven, the Lord over a kingdom greater than Pilate’s
    - a. such a confession *could* make Pilate consider him a *political threat* and have him executed
    - b. but, Jesus makes the confession *anyway*, knowing that it was *for this very purpose* that he came into the world – **i.e.** to die for the very people who belong to his kingdom
  - c. so, for Timothy, the “good confession” is the willingness to admit *publicly, and under threat of real, existential danger*, that he belongs to this Christ and his kingdom *and* is willing to surrender himself in obedience to the implications of that confession
    1. **confession #1:** that Jesus is Lord and Master and King over all things (**Rom. 10:9**)  
*“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*
    2. **confession #2:** that the ways of *this world* are evil, so I must *repent* of them (**Acts 2:38**)  
*“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”*
    3. **confession #3:** that Christ is my only righteousness, so I must live by faith in him (**Rom. 1:17**)  
*“For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for [to] faith ... the righteous shall live by faith”*
  - d. **principle: this is what we must “take hold of”: the eternal life that comes from a public confession of faith in Christ – a faith that permeates our entire existence**
    1. “*in the presence of many witnesses*” (**v. 12**) = a) all who cheered your *initial confession* of faith in Christ, b) all who *watch you live out that faith in day-to-day obedience*, and c) all who see that you have confessed faith in Christ, but *despite the fact that you live for him*
2. **key charge:** “*I charge you in the presence of ...*” (**vv. 13-14a**) = a charge to Timothy to *live out this confession in true obedience*, recognizing that the *true witnesses* to his confession are *divine*
- a. **note:** this is the *third* charge that Paul has leveled on Timothy in this letter (**see also 1:18; 5:21**)
  - b. it is a charge to “*keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach*”
    1. **a summary:** to “*flee*” from sinful temptations and to “*pursue*” the things of God (**v. 11**); to “*fight the good fight of the faith*” by trusting in Christ in every aspect of life (**v. 12a**); to “*take hold of*” eternal life by living out the calling of God and the good confession of faith (**v. 12b**)
  - c. it is a charge before two great divine witnesses:
    1. **first witness:** “*God*” – the fullest nature of the Godhead; Yahweh, the source of all life
      - a. Paul charges Timothy to live his confession as *the One who gives life* is observing his every move – **i.e.** to live before the Life-Giver **as one worthy to have life**
    2. **second witness:** “*Christ Jesus*” – the Son of God; the Incarnate One, the source of *new life*
      - a. **i.e.** the One who (himself) made a “good confession” in *his* life (**see above**)
      - b. Paul charges Timothy to live his confession as *the One who gives new life* is observing his every move – **i.e.** to live before the Redeemer **as one worthy to have new life**

3. **key application:** back to our question above ...
- a. **question:** how (exactly) do we “*take hold of*” the assurance of eternal life? what does it mean to grasp a confidence in having “*eternal life?*” what do we **do** to find true assurance, in spite of our natural tendency to question our eternal state due to the *continuing* reality of sin in us?
  - b. **answer: what you have confessed to be true, in a public sense, you must now continue to confess, in a truly public sense**
  - c. **our assurance of eternal life is found in *continuing* to confess what we confessed to *begin with* – we must *constantly remember* what we initially confessed to be true, and hold fast to those truths as we “stumble” forward in obedience**
    1. our *initial* confession was belief that Jesus died and was raised for the forgiveness of our sin, and that we now stand righteous before God by putting our faith in his promises
    2. our *continuing* confession is to *hold fast* to those truths, *regardless* of how the Tempter might try to convince us that we are “unworthy”
    3. our *consistent* confession is to strive to walk in a manner worthy of those truths, and to repent every time we fall, recognizing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ