

Fight the Good Fight of the Faith

1. **With Your Feet**
2. **With Your Hands**
3. **With Your Mouth**

Fight the Good Fight of the Faith

- 8 wks, 1 Tim. Paul to Tim in Eph. Only 6 chs, filled w/ Spirit-inspired instructions for young pastor, also all Christians. Think back: pure doctrine; who pray for; qualifications for pastors, leaders; spiritual exercise, diet; warnings against misuse of money. Last week: emph on greed, how to wisely use money. Lot of themes.
- Today, we come to end of letter (& series); Paul wraps up letter with concluding encouragements for young colleague. Arm around, "After everything so far, leave you with this final word." FGFF. Just sang; FGFF. Mean? That having faith, believing in Jesus, puts you in constant struggle, battle. Means as Christian, must fight: vs temptation (out & in); for cause of Gospel (working hard support church, train family, share Jesus); (focus) with persistence, endurance – entire lives. Struggle; but one God calls good. So, Paul leaves Tim (& us) with this final word: FGFF, with feet, hands, mouth.

With Your Feet

- **Vs. 11.** "Flee from this; pursue this;" gives picture of running, away & toward. Remember: we're in battle; in battle when run away? If retreating; if enemy more powerful, about to overtake, and get orders to get out now, you run away! Flee with reckless abandon; get out of there as fast as can! Sometimes in military situations, not looked on favorably – fleeing, running away. But **vs. 11a.** What's this? Temptation and sin. Before this, lengthy list of vices; talks about: "**controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth**" (6:4-5). That's what you run away from; nothing dishonorable about running away from devil's attempts to get you to sin, rob you of truth of gospel.
- So FGFF with feet; "flee" from sin and "pursue" (list of virtues), **vs. 11b.** That's what we run toward. In sports, athletes run toward something. Soccer (lots this fall), toward ball; cross country, toward finish line. Run hard, run fast. As Christians, this is what we're running toward, pursuing: **vs. 11b.** In list of virtues, what stands out to me: endurance, because when run, need endurance. Need stamina to keep running, keep going, keep feet moving, even when tired. Lot of things about FGFF that can make you tired, wear you down. When we FGFF with feet, our prayer is for endurance, so can keep feet moving away from sin ("flee") and toward ("pursue") life of faith and godliness.

With Your Hands

- Also with hands. **Vs. 12b.** Take hold, grasp, with hands. When athletes compete in tournament and take 1st, often get trophy. Everyone wants to touch, hold, lift above heads for all to see; don't want to let go because theirs, earned it. With that same excitement, Paul: **vs. 12b.** What's different between trophy like this and trophy Paul talks here: may earn this, never earn trophy of eternal life. If win championship game, might say earned it. But re "**eternal life...called,**" you can't earn that. That's trophy Savior JC earned for you, when fought good fight on Good Friday, battled Satan on cross, when gave up his life to give you eternal life as gift of grace. By blood, sweat, tears of Savior, that Good Friday fight was fought, won; Lord took trophy he earned, put into your hands, for you to hold.
- What it means: **vs. 12b.** That trophy of salvation is yours, won by Christ. So hold onto it by faith. Faith is like hand; holds on. Weak hold: Devil. Firm hold: strong faith. So FGFF with hands; hold on to Savior Jesus with strong faith, all might, don't let go gift of salvation Christ has won for and given to you. FGFF with hands.

With Your Mouth

- Finally, with mouth. How fight with mouth? Not with spiteful speech, verbal attacks – presidential race. By making good confession of faith. Paul told Tim: **vs. 12bc**. Tim did. Maybe when ordained as pastor; earlier spoke of elders laying hands on. Maybe earlier in life; not sure. Either way, Paul recalls time when Tim, in presence of many witnesses, made good confession of faith.
- In same breath, also recalls time when Jesus made good confession of faith. **“I charge you...vs. 13.”** All of sudden talking re Pilate. So Paul wants to take us back to Good Friday morning, to dialogue between Jesus & Pilate. **John 18:33-37** (Lent ~ Oct). That was good confession our Savior made, day he died to save us. With mouth, Jesus FGFF.
- How do we do that (like Jesus, Tim) – make good confession? Suppose as we live daily lives, occasions arise when verbally defend faith, speak the truth about Jesus to others. When those occasions arise, we pray Spirit give us strength to speak, words to say, so we don’t shirk away from opportunity to share truth. But when I hear “good confession,” know what I think? Luth confirmation. Not saying that’s only what this verse is talking about. But when confirmed as Luth, make good confession. Say: “I’ve been taught truths of Scripture by pastors of this church; become convinced that Luth church teaches Gospel of JC with incredible accuracy, clarity; now before this cong want to declare I believe Gospel of Jesus, truth of God, which this Luth cong carefully defends and boldly proclaims. I promise to be faithful to Savior, even in face of death.” That’s really what a confirmand is saying at Luth confirmation. Good confession.
- If you are adult member of this cong, or of another Luth cong, then you’ve made good confession like that sometime in past. Remember conf? Maybe not all details; for some, decades ago. But I hope you remember your conf: your conviction of faith, determination to stay true to the truth, faithful to Savior. May 4, 1997 – me. I hope you think about conf often, or if not confed, look forward to it; because making good confession like that is part of FGFF.

Conclusion

- So whether with feet (flee sin, pursue righteousness); hands (take hold of salvation by faith); or mouth (good confession), fellow fighters, keep FGFF. Fight against Satan & temptation; fight for cause of Gospel; fight with persistence & endurance, **“until...vs. 14b-15a.”** When that time comes, that day of judgment, then all us who FGFF will glorify **“God...vs. 15b-16.”**

John 18:33-37

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”...

³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

1 Timothy 6:11-16

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.