

Fight the Good Fight of the Faith

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Fight the Good Fight of the Faith

- No such thing as comfortbl Xianity. Comfort: not path Xp walkd, not path calls us follow. And that's very hard lesson us learn whose Xianity: fairly comfortbl. Nice ch, nice ppl, AC, snacks after service, freedom/relgn. At another time/place, Xians like you/me were unlike you/me: burnd stake, naild Xs, fed lions, hunt'd down, illeglzd. Today J calls on us: take up cross, follow him. That is a call to an uncomfrtbl Xianity. So is what Paul says today: FGFF. Just sang. What mean? Means: belvng in J puts you in constnt strgl, real battle, fierce fight vs devil, wrld, self. And it's painful strgl & lifelong battle; but it's a fight that God calls good. So today, Lord thru Paul urges all of us: FGFF.

With Your Feet

- 1st, w/ft. **Vs. 11.** Flee fr/pursue this; run away/toward this. Remem: we're in battle. And in battle, when run away? If retreating; if enemy more pwrfl, about overtake, and get orders to get out there – that's when run away, as fast as can! Smtms in battle, fleeing/running away: not seen as very honorbl. But **vs. 11a.** What “all this”? Temptn & sin. Right before this vs comes lengthy list of vices: **“envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction btwn men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth” (6:4-5).** That's what you run away fr! Just like Joe running away Potiphr's wife, there's nthng dishnrbl re running away fr devil's attempts get you sin & rob you of truth/Gos.
- So FGFF w/ft. Flee fr sin, & pursue (list/virtues), **vs. 11b.** That's what we run toward. In soccer, ball; fball, endzone; bball, hoop; race, finsh line. Athletes run hard & fast. As Xians, we run toward/pursue a Xian life of: **vs. 11b.** And what stands out me here: endrnc, bec when run, need endrnc; stamina to keep going, keep ft moving, even when tired. Lot things re being a Xian that can wear you down, tire out. So as we FGFF w/ft, our prayer: for endrnc, to flee fr sin & pursue rightsnss.

With Your Hands

- FGFF also w/hnds. **Vs. 12b.** Take hold it, grasp, cling w/hnds. When athletes compete in tournmnt & take 1st place, often get trophy, like this. When get that trophy, all want do: hold, lift above heads for all see; don't want let go bec theirs, earned it. It's w/that same exctmnt Paul: **vs. 12b.** But there's big diff btwn trophy like this & trophy Paul talks here. You may earn trophy like this. But the **“eternal life...called”** is trophy you could nvr earn on own. That's the trophy your Sav J earned for you, when FGF on GF & battled Satan on cross & gave up life to give you etrn'l life. By blood/sweat/tears of your Sav, that GF fight was fought & won. Then your Lord took trophy he earned, put into your hands, for you to have and hold onto.
- That's what means: **vs. 12b.** That trophy/salvtn is yours, won by Xp, given by him to you by grace. So hold onto it by faith. Faith is like hand; holds on to what bels. Don't hold on w/weak grip, so that dvl can knock out hands. Hold on tight, w/all might. Don't let Xp's most precious gift to you slip out your hnds. Cling to J & FGFF w/hnds.

With Your Mouth

- FGFF w/mouth. How do that? Not w/spiteful speech or verbal attcks, but by confssng/declrng faith in J w/wrds. Paul told Tim: **vs. 12** – prhps when ordnd as Pr, or maybe earlier in life as teenager; not sure. But Paul remems when Tim publicly confssd faith w/wrds, w/mouth. Also recalls how J made good confssn. **“I charge you...vs. 13.”** So all sudden talkng re GF & PP & his dialogue w/J, fr **Jn 18:33-37.** That was the good confssn our Sav made, publicly, day died save us. J FGFF w/mouth.
- So how we do that (like J & Tim) – how make good confssn our faith? Certly occsns arise in our daily lives when we can publicly, verbally share our faith & speak truth re J to others. And when those occsns arise, we pray Spirit give us strngth say what needs be said, boldly confess Gos.

- But when I hear “good confssn,” know what I think? Luth conf. When you’re confrmd in Luth Ch, you make a good confssn. Say: “I’ve been tght trths/Scr by Prs/Ch; and become convncd that Luth Ch tchs Gos/Xp w/incrdbl accrcy & clarity. So now before this cong I want declare: in my hrt I bel Gos, which this Luth cong carefully defnds & boldly proclms. And I prom be faithful to Sav, even in face/dth.” That’s really what a confrmd is saying at Luth conf; and that’s a good confssn.
- Remember your Luth conf? Maybe you confrmd few wks ago; maybe few decades ago. But whether 14, 40, or 84, I hope you remem your confssn/faith and your detrmntn to stay true to truth & faithful to Sav. I was confrmd: 5/4/97. This yr’s youth conf: May 7th, 8 wks ago today. And in our ch archives we have records of confs going back all way to 1800s. Think re your conf often. Or if not confrmd, look forward to it, bec making good confssn like that is one way to FGFF w/mouth.

With Your Heart

- Finally, FGFF w/hrt. And I say that bec in today’s Gos J: follwng him means loving him more than: prnts, kids, anythng. It’s fr hrt: love; and hurt. J calls on us love him fr hrt more than anythng else in wrld. And smtms our fam membs share that faith in their hrt. But when don’t, or when turn away fr J, that hurts; it’s like a sword to hrt. J: **“I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (Mt 10:34)**. So FGFF means following J w/total commitmnt, loving him fr hrt above evthng; and being prepared to hurt in your hrt over unbelf not only in wrld but also among own fam/frnds. You have to strngthn your hrt for swords that will pierce it, even as you love Lord w/all hrt. And that’s a real struggle!

Conclusion

- But remem: no such thng as comfrtbl Xianity. Following J: not easy; never meant to be; it’s a fight. It’s a fight you fight w/ft (flee sin, pursue rightsnss); w/hands (take hold salvtn by faith); w/mouth (good confssn/faith); and w/hrt (hrt filled w/ love, and smtms hrt filled w/hurt).
- So my fellow good-faith-fighters, FGFF, **“until...vs. 14b-15a,”** when finally all of us who FGFF here will, in hvn, 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.