

"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT"

Hi Church Family,

Eric Lindsay here with today's encouragement. When I was a kid, I got into a few fights at my school and in my neighborhood. At the time, I thought most of them were justified. I had a personal definition of justice and when that definition was maligned in any way, I would attempt to 'correct' the situation and that sometimes involved a fight. It was certainly a bad way to represent Christ with my life.

But not all fights are bad! In fact, Paul tells Timothy, and us, to:

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

1 Timothy 6:12

What is this 'fight of faith'? Paul is saying that our faith is sometimes threatened by doubt and unbelief, so we must fight to maintain faith and to keep on believing God and trust his promises. For a little context, the apostle Paul was advising young Timothy about how to handle issues in the church in Ephesus while encouraging him during difficult times. So, in this sixth chapter of the first letter, Paul tells him to 'fight the good fight of faith' in verse 12. Later Paul writes:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." **2 Timothy 4:7**

Most of us will experience times when we feel weak in faith, when doubts set in. This is the battleground. For many, this may be one of those times right now. Disease is on the move and many people are in harm's way. Healthcare systems are being taxed. Economies are struggling and jobs are being lost. On top of that, church buildings are closed, and we can't go on with some of the rhythms of church life that we love.

So, we are in a fight. But what are we fighting against? **Unbelief**. While we may focus on fighting to keep germs out of our home or to keep our loved ones healthy or to keep our jobs...and these are all worthy efforts...our bigger fight is to maintain faith in God and his ability to provide for us, no matter what that looks like. In his sermon this week, Pastor Ken reminded us that God's provision is spiritual. He promises to protect the souls of those who believe in His son. We may still face job loss and the impacts of disease, but our future with Him is **untouchable**. Resisting our tendency

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toward unbelief and fighting against the notion that we are the answer to our problems isn't easy. So often we look first to our own strength and strategies to provide for ourselves in times of need. But leaning on our own understanding is a fool's errand.

Paul tells us later that fighting the good fight of faith leads us to take hold of eternal life! I recently read John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The main character in the book, named Christian, struggles and fights for a long time until he is safe in the Celestial City. He is home with the King and that is in our future as well!

But why does Paul call it a 'good' fight? I think there are several reasons for that, but one is that in the end, it brings glory to God. Why? Because it makes us realize that we have to give our troubles to God and let Him carry them. The good news is, He wants to! John Piper wrote:

"this is a good fight because it is not a struggle to carry our burdens but a struggle to let our burdens be carried for us. The life of faith is an unburdened life. It a fight for the freedom from worry. It's a fight for hope, and peace, and joy which are all threatened by unbelief and doubt about God's promises. And since freedom and hope and peace and joy are good, the fight to preserve them is a good fight."

And all this brings Him glory!

Here is some more good news: **we don't have to fight this alone**. God's Holy Spirit in us is right there all the way. Listen for His voice, His leading, His encouragement. And we have each other. As best we can during this time of social distancing, let's lift one another up in prayer, and conversation and service. So, that is my thought for the day. Keep fighting church family by leaning hard on the promises of God!

In Christ,

Eric Lindsay

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Paul use the word 'fight' in verse 12?
2. In what way is our fight a fight of faith?
3. Why does the apostle Paul call it a good fight?
4. How do we go about engaging in this fight successfully?



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