

Series: Body Essentials: Imperatives for Church and Leaders**Today's Message: Fight the Good Fight of Faith with Eternity in Your Grasp, pt 2; 1 Timothy 6:12**

In 1 Timothy 6:11 Paul urges Timothy to **flee** from the folly of the false teachers and devote himself **to pursuing** the virtues of righteousness and goodness, faith and love, and endurance and gentleness. All these godly virtues would be necessary to resist the lure of the easier life of the false teachers who were profiting from their insidious doctrine and conduct.

In 6:12 Timothy was commanded to view his pastoral work as a good fight of the faith. He says, "Fight the good fight of the faith." Timothy couldn't allow himself to forget that in spite of continual spiritual warfare, that the good fight was indeed good and was worth the pain. You say, what makes us know that the suffering associated with the good fight of faith is worth it? Look at the second part of 6:12 and you'll see. He presses Timothy to "take hold of the eternal life to which you were called." I want us to look at this today and think about how encouraging the meaning of Paul's command to Timothy truly is. We will look at three key points: What does it mean to take hold of eternal life? How is eternal life a calling? And why is remembering one's testimony so important?

I) Take Hold of Eternal Life: What does it mean to take hold of eternal life?

- A) In context, Paul has just told Timothy to fight the good fight of the faith.
- 1) It is good but it is going to be a daily struggle to stay in it. What will keep him in it?
 - (a) It won't be because every moment will be a "from victory unto victory" engagement.
 - (i) To the contrary, he'll be hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. (2 Cor. 4:8-9)
 - 2) Timothy will need to continually be invoking the knowledge of both the present and future reality of eternal life.
 - (a) Eternal life is forever, but unlike the lost who will have a miserable eternity, Paul describes it in the words of Jesus that this eternity is "life." Not just existence, but **zoe life!**
 - (i) This *zoe life* is more abundant forever in the **presence** of God; an eternal existence marked by joy, peace and love along with forever enjoying the eternal riches of His kindness in Christ!
- B) Take hold of the eternal life...
- 1) Take hold: grasp, hold onto NOW!
 - (a) Eternal life is Timothy's now. All the spiritual blessings. All but being in the physical presence of God is ours now, and IT CAN'T BE LOST!
 - (i) He urges Timothy to take hold of it; to own it, be moved by the knowledge of it.
 - (a) We are given promise after promise of the present benefits of eternal life.
 1. A good study for you would be Ephesians 1, 2, and 3 to meditate on the benefits.
- C) How can we take hold of eternal life?
- 1) Remember the words of Jesus.
 - (a) John 6:63 Jesus said, "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life (*zoe*)."
 - (i) Feast on His words! His words are spiritual, abundant and full of *zoe*!
 - 2) You take hold of eternal life when you structure your life on the foundation of Christ and the Word of God!
 - (a) **Appl: What you are looking for is what you will live for. What are you looking for?**
 - (i) If you are looking for "the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)" you will live for Him!
 - (a) You will be taught by His grace (Titus 2:11-12)
 - (b) **Appl: What are you looking for? The quality of your enjoyment of, or the lack of enjoyment of eternal life is dependent on your behavior and your life choices as a Christian.**

- (i) It matters how you live. Eternal life is not something you feel, it is something you express through biblically ethical behavior.
- (ii) You and I have to understand that it is essential that if we are to enjoy eternal life now that we demonstrate the spiritual and ethical qualities that are part of the essential nature of God.
 - (a) Our lives should reflect the pattern of self-sacrifice (love) and humility of our Lord Jesus.
 - 1. According to 1 John, if we lack these qualities, we may not have eternal life.

II) A Divine Calling: How is eternal life a divine calling and not a decision of man's free will?

A) A Sovereign call of God: a divine calling

- 1) The calling is of God and like election and predestination is a decision of God before the foundation of the world. Those that are called are called according to the grace of God. This calling is not based on any foreseen merit in the person called.
 - (a) 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 1:4, 5, 11; Romans 8:28-30
 - (i) Those God "foreknew" and "predestined" were called with an effectual, divine calling. And everyone He called He justified; and those He justified He glorified! (Rom. 8:28-30)
- 2) God called Timothy to eternal life! "...the eternal life to which you were called..."
 - (a) The knowledge of God's sovereign election and calling would spur Timothy on to live with an eternal mindset, both the present reality and the future reality of eternal life.
 - (b) This mindset would protect Timothy from the meaningless battles Paul has mentioned several times in 1 Timothy (such as 6:3-10), and instead, cause him to think about heavenly things!

B) What are we called too?

- 1) Eternal (zoe) life (John 3:16); redemption and the forgiveness of sins without ever experiencing condemnation for those sins (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 8:1); cleansing of sin's guilt by the blood of Christ (Rom.5:1,9); a new relationship with God: Abba, Father (Rm. 8:15); sonship (Rom. 8:16); an inheritance of eternal, divine magnitude (Rom. 8:17); a new kingdom (Col. 1:13); called to belong to Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:6); eternal fellowship with God (Phil. 2:1; 1 Jn. 1:3); His blessing (1 Pet. 3:9); to His eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10); and to return with Him in triumphant procession at the end of this age (Rev. 17:14).

C) The "take hold of eternal life" mindset:

- 1) Timothy was engaged in strenuous spiritual warfare. But the seasoned apostle armed Timothy with the proper way to face daily difficulties, disappointments, trials and afflictions. "Take hold"
 - (a) How would your life change for the better if you were to take hold of the eternal life to which you were called?

III) The necessity of testimony: Why is remembering your own testimony so important to the church?

A) "...when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

- 1) Paul is reminding Timothy of his **good confession**.
 - (a) It was a *personal* reminder of a *public* confession of faith.
 - (i) Probably included his baptism (public confession of an inward work of God).
 - (ii) Probably included his public testimony and witness to Christ before the Church.
- 2) Believers should be willing to give their public testimony. Some reasons why:
 - (a) The Church can better provide spiritual support and public affirmation for that person.
 - (b) The Church can provide accountability to the confessing Christian.
 - (i) This accountability will encourage the person to live an authentic Christian life!
 - (c) It provides the Church enjoyment to hear you confess the "reason for your hope in Christ! (1 Pet. 3:15)
 - (i) To hear that a person has indeed set apart Christ in their hearts is encouraging to all.

B) Appl.:

- 1) When was the last time you rehearsed your own public testimony?

- 2) How has your life changed since you first came to Christ? What difference would a present testimony make in the lives of fellow believers?
- 3) Challenge: If your testimony does not reflect a sense of God's present work in your life, would you give some serious thought to thinking about how Jesus has recently been working in your life?
- 4) I invite you now, if you are willing to come and give a testimony of how the Lord has been working in your life.