



## THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

At the end of his life, the apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy, his protégé, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* (2 Tim. 4:7) Paul had seen God moved in supernatural ways throughout his short gospel ministry. Cities were turned upside down by his preaching of the Gospel with signs and wonders. The sick were miraculously healed and some of the dead had been resurrected. Pagans like Timothy, Titus and others, had been rescued out of the kingdom of darkness and had become mighty bearers of the Gospel. But life in this physical world had not been easy for Paul.

Life on earth for the citizens of Kingdom of God is not a leisurely day on the beach, but one long battle that must be continuously waged. The Bible calls the Christian life an endurance race – a marathon, not a 100-meter sprint – that must be run with perseverance to the end (Heb. 12:1). It's not an Olympic boxing bout of four two-minute rounds, it's a professional 15-rounder championship match.

Earlier in Timothy's ministry training, Paul had passed on to him God's command to every follower of Christ: *"Fight the good fight of faith."* (1 Tim. 6:12) We are called to be warriors of faith. We are commanded to fight an agonizing battle to "keep the faith" until the end of our earthly days.

The sad fact is for most Christians, faith is one of those words that are used frequently but with very little understanding of what it really means. Some think of faith as a means of becoming rich through the biblical principles of Christian stewardship and generous giving. Others see faith as something we may need occasionally, but only in an emergency. Their view of faith is similar to their attitude to their spare tire. They know it's there but hope they never have to use it. They're not even sure how to use their spare tire should the emergency occur.

In America, faith is not a part of the average Christian's daily life. It's possible for most Christians to live for months without having to exercise any real faith, let alone fight a good fight of faith. They rarely see faith as their mightiest spiritual weapon against the devil. So, they settle down to some compromised passivity because the only alternative to fighting a good fight of faith is to come to terms of peace with the devil. They end up foregoing the life of victory and power that God meant for Christ's followers to live.

For the next few weekends, we will explore biblical faith and how we can fight the good fight of faith. What is a "good fight"? For athletes, a good fight is a fight that they win. For those involved in any conflict, a good fight means being on the right side – fighting for what's right. For us Christians, a good fight is one that God has ordained for us. It is one that He has commanded us to fight, one He has predestined for us to win.

Let's be clear about one thing: the good fight of faith is not a fight to earn our salvation. It is not persevering to remain saved either. Salvation is and will always be God's gracious gift to undeserving sinners. While it is true that we receive salvation by faith, "saving faith" has no merit in itself. It cannot be used like money to purchase salvation or any of God's gifts. The simple truth is this: only believers who already possess complete assurance of their salvation in Christ can be warriors of faith. Only those who have received the faith of Jesus as born-again citizens of the Kingdom can fight the good fight of faith.

The good fight of faith is the fight to advance God's Kingdom against the kingdom of darkness in this world. It is a fight to access the realities in the heavenly realm so we can affect the physical realm, so God's will becomes true on earth as it is in heaven. It is a fight to break down the gates of hell so its prisoners could be liberated from the bondage of sin. It is a fight to bring light to those who have been blinded by God's enemy through the spirit of religion and unbelief. Yes, it is a fight, and it will always be, because our life in the Kingdom goes against what's natural to us.

How do we fight good fight of faith? We do this by making it our daily priority to look upon Jesus, the "Author and Finisher" of our faith (Heb. 12:2). Jesus is the greatest warrior of faith. His entire earthly life is the best example of a good fight of faith. Everything He did on earth was done through faith. His works of miracles flowed from His faith in His Heavenly Father, but Jesus' life of faith was not easy. It was a fight all the way, from His birth in a humble stable to His ignominious execution on a Roman cross.

It was by faith in God's Word that Jesus knew who He was and what He was sent to do. It was by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit that He performed His compassionate ministry to the sick and those possessed by demons. It was by faith that Jesus fought in Gethsemane to be true to His mission of saving humanity in spite of feeling separated from His Father. It was by faith that He suffered abandonment by His disciples and physical torture by Roman soldiers. It was by faith that He surrendered His spirit to God, believing that He would rise from the tomb on the third day. He did this because of His unending love for all of us. And now He's saying to us, *"Fight the good fight of faith. I fought it for you."*

What shall we say to Him then? Let's say to Him, "Lord, You know all about faith! I want your faith, not to receive bigger cars and more comfortable homes, but to see the Word of God manifested here in my church. I want to see my city broken open for the Kingdom of God. I want the devil defeated and destroyed on every side. You were the greatest warrior of faith the world has ever seen. I want to learn to fight like You. So, please fill my spirit with Your faith."