

“Fight The Good Fight Of The Faith ...”

“... lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Because the definite article *“the”* appears before *“faith,”* it is apparent that *“the faith”* is the system, or doctrine, which came from Jesus. *“There is one faith,”* which faith we must contend for (Eph. 4:4; Jude 3). To this faith *“a great company of priests were obedient”* and in the gospel is revealed a righteousness *“from faith unto faith;”* i.e., from the doctrine proclaimed unto the resulting conviction in the heart (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:17). Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, tells why he believed a crown of righteousness was laid up for him. Among other things he had *“kept the faith”* (2 Tim. 4:7).

To fight a good fight implies that Timothy was engaged in a battle. Elsewhere Paul urged Timothy to *“suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim. 2:3). Fighting the good fight of the faith demands that one recognize discipline and commitment. *“No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who enrolled him as a servant”* (2 Tim. 2:4). Paul practiced what he preached. He wrote the Corinthians, *“I buffet my body and bring it into subjection, lest ... I myself should be a castaway”* (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul’s “commitment” is seen in these words. *“Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:13f).

Paul had *“fought a good fight.”* *“The faith”* calls that man have convictions, to stand. *“Having done all, to stand”* (Eph. 6:13). *“Lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called.”* The scriptures teach a universal call is made to all, but man must accept to be chosen (Mt. 20:16). We are called by God through the gospel (1 Thess. 2:11; 2 Thess. 2:14); we are called in one body (1 Pet. 3:15), from darkness to light (1 Pet. 2:9). We are called in one hope of our calling (Eph. 4:4). We are to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10). We are to *“lay hold,”* to seize onto, eternal life. Our Calvinist friends tells us that we *“presently have eternal life”* and since we do, we cannot lose it; because if we lose it; it would not have been eternal!

There is a sense in which we have eternal life. John tells us how: *“And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life”* (1 Jn. 5:11f). Eternal life is a promise, not a present possession. Paul said he was in *“hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie,*

promised ..." (Tit. 1:3). Promise and hopes are something to be realized. *"For in hope were we saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopeth for that for which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we have not, then do we with patience wait for it"* (Rom. 8:24f). When the apostles asked what they would receive for following Christ, He assured them they would receive a hundred fold in *"this time"* and in the world to come, eternal life (Mk. 10:30). These passages show that eternal life is not now a present possession, rather, it is something we receive at the judgment (Mt. 25:46). Eternal life is something we must strive to lay hold on. If we miss out on eternal life, it were better that we had never been born.

"And didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses." The confession Timothy made is called the "good confession." the same confession Jesus made before Pilate and the confession Peter made when Jesus asked, *"Whom say ye that I am?"* to which Peter responded, *"Thou art he Christ, the son of the living God"* (Matt. 16:18). Our hope of eternal life rests upon our confession of Jesus' deity. If He is God, He can give life to the dead. If He is not God, then all our hopes and wishes relate solely to this age. *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not. He is faithful who promised"* (Heb. 10:23)!

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