

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT



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"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck."
(1 Timothy 1:18-19)

In Christianity there is one special kind of fight – the fight for faith. Believe it or not, our faith does not renew itself automatically, it requires of us preliminary actions in order to function and stay alive.

Faith in Jesus Christ, or Christianity, is not a religion that is a passive hope living

in expectation that God will bring change without active involvement of believers.

Understanding the importance of faith as an agent of help that withstands pressure in and around the congregation, Paul encouraged the young pastor Timothy to fight for the faith. Faith is important as a help in times of pressure or in extinguishing the evil darts of the doubt, fear, temptation and discouragement; it helped Timothy do endure to the end in his

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calling by faith. Paul instructed him that he should not give in and become passive, but be courageous, obey God, and do that which he knew was right.

1. CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO THE GOOD FIGHT TO PRESERVE THEIR FAITH.

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

As believers we do not have a choice – we are called to fight for our faith. We cannot run from the fight, because to run means alienation from the Lord.

After conversion we often didn't have problems with faith because it was strong and fresh due to the many testimonies we had experienced by living with God. In the first days of our life with Jesus we were often

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active in prayer and work for God, we fought violently against demons, attacks, and the strongholds in our lives; we experienced victories and often those things around us quickly and drastically changed. Yet, after some time we often find ourselves discouraged because at times we relax and experienced a shipwreck of faith. For some this can be disastrous, because in those moments many turn from the Lord and the plans He has for them.

This is why I consider it needful to especially emphasize that we are all, without exception, called to aggressively fight for our faith in Jesus! I am not implying that we fight by convulsively holding on to our faith or apologetically defend against wrong teaching or false teachers, rather first of all by active belief and fellowship with the Lord, fighting for our faith in order to have strength to withstand all the pressures so we can endure to the end of our faith, fulfilled promises, and eternal life to which we are all called. Finally, it is not as important how we began our journey with Jesus, but how we finish it.

The apostle Paul was an example of a man who didn't only begin good but ended his race well. When he wrote his second letter to Timothy, likely from the Roman prison while waiting execution under the rule of the Roman Emperor Nero, he said, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept

the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Paul did not reach the end of his race by passively observing and marveling God's beauty sitting on his balcony in Jerusalem, nor did he say to Timothy that when trials come to stop and leave it all to God's grace to fight all his battles for him and to strengthen his faith without having to lift a finger.

Actually, when he encouraged him to fight for his faith he used a strong verb in the imperative meaning to command, fight, hold on, to bid, etc. The Greek word that Paul used in his letter was that Timothy must fight "agonizomai". The word describes agony, meaning a tough battle for faith in times of opposition and difficulty. The word also describes even the pain that we carry while fighting for the prize. When he mentions battle, he used the Greek word "agon" which implies a forced battle in the context of running games or boxing, as an example.

In other words, Paul declares that we must actively fight for our faith or we will easily lose the battle and experience shipwreck. Faith is not something that is given to us at the beginning of conversion that automatically renews itself upon every New Year, because Christianity and our relationship with Christ is not a passive or lazy religion, rather an active

battle for survival, faith, and fulfillment of God's promises, as is victory over the powers of darkness. Paul wrote to Timothy to fight the good fight of faith and to cling to the eternal life to which he was called. Therefore, fighting and clinging are not passive elements that imply that we must endure something until the end in order to win the prize.

From the day we put our faith in the Lord until the day we die we must fight the good fight of faith every single day. From the day we are converted Satan will do all he can to discourage us and distance us from our faith in God's promises because he knows that if we put of our faith in God anything is possible for us. As the day of Christ's second coming draws nearer the fight for our faith grows more and more intense and many Christians knuckle under the fiery darts of evil in the shape of

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doubt, lies, temptation, and discouragement; the only weapon we have against this is faith. This is why Paul wrote to the Ephesians about faith as one of the important elements of the armor: the shield against the attack of evil. "Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." (Ephesians 6:16)

Paul then wrote to Timothy to fight for the faith because he knew that only active trust in the Lord can oppose the evil one so that we may go on being faithful and persistent in our walk with God.

If we lose faith and hope we will become easy plunder for the devil. What's more, in place of being active believers we become discouraged, frightened, and ineffective religious followers without true joy and strength of the Holy Spirit, and without true results for God's kingdom.

We cannot become lax, because we are in a war for our faith. Whoever said it was easy to

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be a Christian probably never had a very close relationship with God. The one who claims that he has not had to fight for his faith probably wasn't even aware that he experienced a shipwreck of faith and has become a fleshly Christian (if such Christians truly exist).

Paul commanded Timothy to fight for the faith. This fight was not an option or a suggestion. We are in a war for our faith – if we do not want to take part in that war Satan will steal our faith from us and on that final day we will not receive the reward of eternal life.

2. WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD AND ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE RESULTS FOR HIM.

"But without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

This is why Satan tries to steal our faith and discourage us, because he knows very well that if we believe in God we will be effective for Him and receive a reward.

It is interesting that these words are put in the context of the heroes of faith. Paul wrote that if we want to approach God we must believe in Him, but not only that, God will reward those who seek Him.

When we cease to actively believe in God we will cease to actively seek Him; because of our

lack of faith He cannot reward us or fulfill the promises He gave to us. This is what Satan wants. He wants to make us passive, religious believers that stand passively discouraged in one place and without faith thinking that everything is okay with us and that heaviness is acceptable because we are in the last days. Actually, we begin to be satisfied with little things such as inconsistent church attendance or passing emotions of joy that come and go while not bringing effective results.

Without active faith in God we will become ordinary religious Christians who are satisfied with either minimal or no results for His kingdom. Satan wants us to believe that outside the walls of the church is a dangerous world and that it is alright to stay in the church without attempting to change the world. He will try to frighten us, rob us of our faith, and cause us to believe in our fears and doubts. But we are not called to be minimal spiritual Christians, rather to do great works of faith for Him; especially outside of the church building and Christian subculture.

Remember Jehoshaphat and his words of faith when they began to travel toward the wilderness of Tekoa. The Word says that he stood when they went out toward the wilderness and in faith said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." (2 Chronicles 20:20) Afterward he placed in front of him the singers and

musicians, and God prepared a trap for their enemies so that they killed one another.

Abraham had to simply believe that God would provide a ram in place of his promised son. I suppose that he wasn't passive and singing while he went to the altar of sacrifice, rather in himself he was surely fighting a good fight of faith in God! The result is known to us – his son remained alive!

Jesus Christ could not have healed the two blind men who cried out to him for mercy if they had not had faith in Him to heal. Jesus said to them "'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.'" (Matthew 9:28b-29) What happened to the boy with epilepsy? When his father said that he had epilepsy from childhood, he asked Jesus to help him if possible. "Jesus said to him, 'If you can

✦ Faith and a good conscience are interconnected. Christians who constantly doubt and question God's Word will reject the faith and consequently harden their conscience and heart and thereby lose discernment of good and evil.



believe, all things [are] possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" (Mark 9:23-24) Faith was the important element for healing!

Remember Caleb and how he had to have faith when at 85 years of age asked Joshua to give him Hebron as an inheritance, for which he waited 45 years. Caleb was a hero of the faith, because after 45 years he did not give up on the promise. He knew that with God everything is possible, which is why he said, "Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim [were] there, and [that] the cities [were] great [and] fortified. It may be that the LORD [will be] with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said." (Joshua 14:12)

Jonathan believed in God as well and conquered in the battle against the Philistines. "Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, 'Come, let us go over to the

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garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.'" (1 Samuel 14:6)

Without faith it is impossible to do anything for the Lord, because we must trust Him if we want to see great works done for Him and His kingdom. His works are often miraculous and unbelievable; this is why we must trust in Him. Often circumstances are such that the results are not promised or are simply impossible, by looking through human eyes; this is why it is important to aggressively and actively fight for the faith, because only by faith will we be able to reach our full potential of that which God has for us, regardless of our present, difficult circumstances.

Apart from biblical heroes of faith, it is worth mentioning a number of all-time heroes such as John Wesley, Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, Hudson Taylor or George Muller who, for example, in Bristol, England, founded a well-known orphanage for children. Writings tell us that he never asked anyone for help, he only prayed to God for those things. In that time it was not easy to open an orphanage, but with God everything was possible! George Muller conquered the battle of faith. It was known that at times, before the food had run out for the next meal, someone would knock on the door and bring food by God's prompting.

When he was encouraged to buy a piece of property to build the orphanage, we are told that he shared his desire with the Lord, having

only two shillings in his pocket (around fifty cents). Without telling anyone his need or desire, in prayer he received a great victory, the donations were received amounting to 1,400,000£ (around 7 million dollars) intended for building and upkeep of the orphanage.

Other than these projects, and the churches in which he preached, in 1834 he began an institution called "Scripture Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad", whose goal was to help missionaries and educate them in spreading the Word. The Institution did not have a committee, membership or any kind of debt; it functioned by faith alone in the Lord. By the time of his death he had gathered over 7.5 million dollars, with which 122,000 people were educated and financially supported, over 280,000 Bibles, 1.5 million New Testaments, and 112 million Christian books and tracts were printed and distributed. If George Muller had not fought for faith in prayer he probably would not have been able to do any of this, because the times and circumstances were not very promising.

3. IF WE DO NOT CARE FOR OUR FAITH AND GOOD CONSCIENCE WE WILL EXPERIENCE DISASTROUS SHIPWRECK OF FAITH.

"Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck." (1 Timothy 1:19)

Faith and a good conscience are inter-connected. Christians who constantly doubt and question

God's Word will reject the faith and consequently harden their conscience and heart and thereby lose discernment of good and evil.

When we fight for the faith we do all we can in our power to proceed correctly, our conscience will react and we will know what is good or bad for our life. But if our conscience becomes dull because we do not do what we know is right, we can experience disastrous shipwreck of faith, simply meaning that our life becomes fleshly because we no longer believe; consequently we cease to live by God's standards as we begin living by our own thinking and discretion that leads us to failure.

This is why many Christians experience shipwreck of faith; they are not patient or perhaps have worked against their conscience making it dull. After some time they grew weary, began to doubt, and thus experienced shipwreck of faith that destroyed their life. If they remain in the church their faces and service show that they are shipwrecked. They

★ Let us be sober, take up the shield of faith so we can defend ourselves in faith from Satan's darts of doubt, fear, trials, and confusion. Let us actively believe in God to endure the end of our race in to which we were called when we began our life with Jesus.



are often negative, anxious, and without the true joy of the Holy Spirit; their least desire is for the salvation of souls.

Passivity and abandonment of faith, or shipwreck, is one reason why Christians today are more and more fleshly; many live without hope and faith, their consciences dulled by their sin. This is a dangerous position because we simply begin living the way the world lives without God and our salvation comes into question.

It is time like never before to arise and begin to fight for our faith; to begin to powerfully and actively fight the fight of faith.

We need to do as Paul wrote "be sober". We must not just passively wait for faith to renew itself just because we attend church sometimes and read a verse or two from the Bible. Christianity is not a passive religion, it is an active faith. This is why we must decide to become obedient to God. Let us encourage ourselves and begin to do that which we know is right before God. Let us be sober, take up the shield of faith so we can defend ourselves

in faith from Satan's darts of doubt, fear, trials, and confusion. Let us actively believe in God to endure the end of our race in to which we were called when we began our life with Jesus.

It is true that God has not appointed us for wrath, rather He has called us inherit eternal life and to hold on to our eternal salvation to which we are called by our Lord Jesus Christ!

"But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:8-9)

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