

Fight the Good Fight of Faith, Lay Hold on Eternal Life

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." 1 Tim. 6:12

These words are especially fitting for tonight's discussion, as they were written by Paul to a young believing person named Timothy. Paul also writes to Timothy about the last days saying, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." 2 Tim. 3:1. He goes on to describe conditions which paint a familiar picture when we consider the time in which we live.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim 3:2-7

This is a sobering and somewhat frightening picture. Questions which can come to mind are:

- "How can I stand against such evil?"
- "Will I have strength to fight the good fight when tempted?"
- "Does God remember me in temptation?"

and so on. These are not unnatural questions. We all feel the weakness of our flesh and the lusts which arise from within. However, there is no better place to be, when faced with such evil and temptations, than in the household of the living God as His child. Here we find comfort, support and encouragement in fighting "the good fight of faith." Our ability to battle against the evils of the world, Satan and our own flesh comes not of ourselves, but through faith. In the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 11, the writer relates of many former saints who overcame severe adversity and trials by faith. They believed the promises of God, denied themselves, took up the cross and followed Christ in life, suffering and doctrine. Simply put, they fought the good fight of faith, desiring "a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11: 16 In other words, they wanted to "lay hold on eternal life." So also do we.

In this battle God does not forget us. He has provided us with unique armour. This armour can not be seen with the natural eyes and yet it protects us from the evil which surrounds us! Paul writes of it in this way:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities. Against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" Eph. 6:10-17

Let's examine these pieces of armour and what they mean to the child of God. We will borrow thoughts from an article written by Einari Lepisto in I Write to You volume 1. First, "having your loins girt about with truth." The loins of the mind are to be girded with truth. Because of this, the child of God can not be hypocritical, leaning towards the opinions of this world. Rather, we stand straight and truthful in faith, endeavoring to keep a good conscience. There is no room to be deceitful. Next, "having on the breastplate of righteousness." We are righteous through faith. Therefore, this breastplate is also pictured in "the shield of faith." With this shield we can deflect the fiery darts of the wicked. We can not lay down the armour of war for even a moment, but through faith battle at all times against sin and temptations. King David is an example of what happens when the weapons of warfare are set aside. When he did not go to war with his soldiers he fell first into adultery and then into murder. Even though we are clothed in battle armour, we still go forward with a message of peace, having our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This message of the gospel is heard even today from the kingdom of God. It resounds at these services. Here we have precious escorts, travel companions as they are so often called, from whom we can hear the words of life and forgiveness - the central message of the gospel. The gospel of which Paul writes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1: 16 It is the power of God unto salvation for you beloved believing young people as well! Do not hesitate to use the gospel which is so freely offered to you. Dip from the open fountains which flow against sin in Zion. The "helmet of salvation" represents the correct understanding of how one becomes saved. The helmet is special. When God's Holy Spirit opens Christ's doctrine and the matters of salvation, it is the protection for the soldier's head. The enemy knows that the head is a tender part of the body. Wounds to this part easily kill the soldier. If the understanding of faith falls apart, then one begins to see the work of God in places where it is

not. We children of God wear this protective helmet, of the correct understanding of salvation, on our heads. Finally, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Jesus did battle with the enemy of souls during his temptation in the wilderness with the word of God. There is no other weapon as powerful as the word of God. For this reason we are encouraged by Christ himself to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Hear the word of God, learn it and believe it. Paul writes to Timothy of "the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15

Be encouraged, young friends, to believe even now the gospel, in the name and blood of Jesus all is forgiven! Your faith life can be refreshed and the weaponry of the Spirit sharpened on the cornerstone of Zion. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." Is. 40:26-29 There is safety and security in the midst of the flock of God. We are uniquely cared for and watched over in the kingdom. Jesus says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Be even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." Luke 12:6-7 You young person, who may be doubting and struggling in faith, are also of great value to your heavenly Father. He has paid a great price for you through the suffering and death of His Son, Jesus Christ the righteous. As a young believer in God's Kingdom you own righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Do not be discouraged! Through the power of God, clothed in His armour, in the fellowship of the believers, you can "fight the good fight of faith" and "lay hold on eternal life!"

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