

## 1 TIMOTHY 6:12

### THE GOOD FIGHT

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”<sup>1</sup>

**S**ix commands are issued in the final statements of this vital missive to a young theologian. “*Flee*” the actions of the false teachers. “*Pursue* righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.” In a future study, we will witness the Apostle commanding the pastor to “*charge*” the rich in this present age to turn from haughtiness and to avoid setting their hopes on their wealth. In the final portion of the Letter, Paul will charge Timothy, “*guard* the deposit entrusted to you.” Six commands—together, they summarise what is necessary to ensure a powerful ministry within the congregation where the Master has settled the man of God. Now, in our study today, we will consider two other imperatives that are essential to a ministry that will honour the Lord Christ—“*Fight* the good fight of the faith. *Take* hold of the eternal life to which you were called.”

The imperatives are essential to a healthy church. Assuredly, the pastor must take these commands to heart and apply them in his life. However, the people must know the task with which the elder is charged so that they may encourage him and assist him in fulfilling the necessary tasks. Also, the people of God need to understand the necessities placed upon the overseer so that they will not rebel against his labours on their behalf. This understanding will ensure that the command issued by the writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians is fulfilled. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” [HEBREWS 13:17].

**THE GOOD FIGHT** — “Fight the good fight of the faith.” As Paul issues multiple commands to Timothy, he urges him to “Fight the good fight of the Faith.” Many people seeing this imagine that Paul is speaking of warfare. To be certain, the Apostle uses militaristic imagery on multiple occasions. However, the concept conveyed in these closing words is that of an athletic contest. Paul is urging Timothy to excel at personal mastery.

The command is admittedly akin to that which Paul issued as he began this particular letter. “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” [1 TIMOTHY 1:18-20].

Clearly, Paul is viewing the work in which Timothy engages as a war and the man of God as a warrior. Unlike the concept that is popularised among cults, our warfare is not conducted with weapons common to the warriors of this fallen world. We do not coerce people to become followers of the Christ. We do not advance the Kingdom of Heaven by sword or gun. This becomes quite clear in another place where the Apostle has written about the type of struggle we conduct. Listen as he addresses the matter when writing the Corinthian Christians.

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**1 TIMOTHY 6:12**  
**FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**

“Though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete” [2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-6].

The statement concerning our warfare and the weapons at our disposal is emphasised as the Apostle discusses the Christian struggle in the Letter to Ephesian Christians. “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” [EPHESIANS 6:10-20].

This is not to say that the struggle in which we engage is easy or that we are universally loved because we are enlisted in the Master’s cause. In fact, Paul will invite Timothy to join in experiencing hardship and even suffering. The Apostle will write, “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” [2 TIMOTHY 2:3, 4].

The warning flows quite naturally out of the cautionary statements of the Master Himself. “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes” [MATTHEW 10:16-23].

Shortly after giving these stern instructions, Jesus would warn those who wished to follow Him, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” [MATTHEW 10:34-39].

Though the Word is quite capable of militaristic language, Paul is not employing such imagery in this instance. When the Apostle calls Timothy to “Fight the good fight of the faith,” he uses language that is quite precise— *aginízou tòn agōna tēs písteos* (ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἄγωνα τῆς πίστεως). Literally, Paul says, “Agonise the good agony.” The language is quite suggestive and highly descriptive. In the original language, the verb “fight” is present tense, indicating that this action must be repeated continually. By this means we are being told not to expect that we do not need to struggle after we come to faith; we can anticipate that we will be challenged to engage continually in this struggle until we are called home. Ours is not a life that will be free of constant struggle against the evil that fills our fallen world.

The term is translated from the Greek lemma *agonízomai*. The word sounds similar to our English word “agonise.” This particular word conveyed the idea of an athletic contest. It spoke of competition, of striving with great intensity and effort.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis is on the effort and not the contest itself.<sup>3</sup> Understand, therefore, that Paul is speaking of the concentration, discipline and effort required to fulfil the instructions of the Faith.

Again, the noun translated “fight” comes from a Greek term with the same root— *agón*. Not surprisingly, the word speaks of a struggle, an exertion or a foot race.<sup>4</sup> What is important for our understanding in this study is that though the words can refer to a battle, the context will dictate whether we are to understand that the writer is speaking of physical struggling or whether he is speaking of nonphysical contention. The context makes it clear that Paul is speaking of the struggle for practical application of the Faith in the life of the minister.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, rather than appealing to the portions of his letters that speak of military actions, we would be better advised to appeal to those portions of Paul’s letters that speak of athletic contests. For instance, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” [1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27].

In his final missive to Timothy the aged saint will speak of his life experience in his triumphant assertion, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” [2 TIMOTHY 4:7]. His life was as a race, and now it was nearing the finish.

Anyone who has ever engaged in a race will understand the intensity Paul insinuates. Runners push themselves to the limit, running until their lungs burn and their feet feel like lead. Then, when it seems they have no more to give, they somehow reach down into an unseen reserve strength that enables them to give one final exertion. Agonisingly, they seem to increase the pace as the finish line draws into view.

Perhaps we could appeal to the imagery of a boxer who, though battered and repeatedly punched like Rocky Balboa, somehow reaches into an unseen reserve to pull out one final exertion to drive into the opponent. Somehow, though the boxer has struggled to keep his hands up and to continue bobbing and weaving, he now finds the strength and the energy to deliver one last blow in order to obtain the knockout.

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<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains** (United Bible Societies, New York, NY 1996) 662

<sup>3</sup> See James Swanson, **Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)** (Logos Research Systems, Inc., Oak Harbor, WA 1997)

<sup>4</sup> Swanson, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Cf. PHILIPPIANS 1:30; COLOSSIANS 2:1; 1 THESSALONIANS 2:2

The annals of the Faith are replete with the names of men and women who found such strength to complete their race. One thinks of Luther at the Diet of Worms and the constant agonies that would follow after he had taken his stand. Or the child of God could speak of John Calvin and his multiple physical infirmities that he spoke of as a “constant death struggle.” Undoubtedly one could appeal to Spurgeon and his bouts of depression, opposition from professed brothers who sought to silence his voice for righteousness. Gresham Machen, founder of Westminster Seminary stood almost alone in the good fight as he witnessed the deviation of his denomination from the sound teaching of the Word.

No less are believers today called to agonise in the good agony. May I speak of my dismay, my deep sorrow, at the state of the Faith in this day? I need not speak of Christian leaders who equivocate in presenting the sound teaching of the Word and who avoid taking a stand on matters of eternal significance or who even turn from righteousness toward evil. Such people are self-condemned and unworthy of note. I am, however, concerned for the spiritual stamina of the people of God. Since they are so seldom nourished from the Word, and since they are not allowed to refresh themselves from streams of clear instruction or to rest in verdant pastures, they are incapable of standing in the evil day; and they are assuredly incapable of exerting themselves to the point of exhaustion to advance the cause of Christ or to win the lost.

The sheep are dyspeptic, seemingly unable to feed themselves even though the shepherd may lead them into rich pastures. Too often the professed people of God look up and bleat in a sick caricature of the other-worldly plant from the “Little Shop of Horrors,” “Feed me!” However, the diet demanded is deficient in nutrients designed to build strong bodies. They demand “solid food” until it is presented, at which time they whimper that they want milk. Tragically, many of the professed saints are even unable to digest milk! And far too many of the preachers of the Word are ignorant of how to prepare a proper meal for those who listen!

Even if solid food is available, the saints are too often unwilling to exercise themselves. They resist exertion and their faith become flabby. Then, when the enemy comes, they are able only to mew in fear as they collapse before the foe. When the enemy approaches, they seek to find some avenue of compromise that will permit them to live in dhimmitude to the denizens of this darkened world.

I understand that some may feel hurt, displeased or even grieved at the clear assertions I am making. Like infantile believers in one congregation, undoubtedly some will whine that the preacher should not hang out the dirty laundry. My response is quite simple: Wash your dirty clothes! Then we can hang out clean laundry! Let me speak broadly of the failure to prepare for the inevitable. Paul warns of the need to withstand in “the evil day” [**EPHESIANS 6:13b**]. This is not a theoretical statement—it is factual. Ask the Christians of Egypt. Of Iraq. Of Syria. Of Myanmar. Of Viet Nam. Or those saints in scores of other locations. Ask those saints who are endeavouring to stand firm on the Word in the face of encroaching wickedness in our own nation and in this day. The “evil day” is not some distant concept; it is a present reality.

Few of the saints of God read the Word of God with any regularity. Ignorant of the Word, they want to argue, engaging in “irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge.’” Among the professed people of God are multiplied examples of such ignorance of the Word. Some want to argue that the saints must use one translation or another, though they are unskilled at applying what they do read. Each of us will benefit from applying the admonition, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” [**2 TIMOTHY 2:15**] to our own lives. To the people of God, I say, use the Bible you prefer, but labour to use that Bible skillfully.

Other saints have some pet doctrine or set of doctrines that they seek to promote almost to the exclusion of all others. Let me speak to this. We need to be careful to embrace the whole of the Body of doctrine that has been presented for our benefit in the Word. I confess that I carry my doctrine lightly on my fingertips. I know what I believe and I am quite prepared to defend why I believe as I do. However, I am unwilling to consign to the dustbin of history or to the theological wastebasket those who disagree with my understanding of the teachings of the Word. I hold to the Doctrines of Grace, but there are many whom I hold in high regard who will disagree with me. They also walk with God; I would be foolish to dismiss them as heretical because they do not quite align themselves with me in the Faith.

John Wesley and George Whitfield were separated by their doctrinal positions—Wesley was an Arminian and Whitfield was a Calvinist. Whitfield was asked on one occasion, “Do you expect to see John Wesley in heaven?”

“No,” Whitfield replied before pausing thoughtfully. “John Wesley will be so close to the Throne of Glory, and I will be so far away, I will hardly get a glimpse of him.”

Again, if the participation of the saints in corporate prayer is any indication, persistent, prevailing prayer is almost unknown in this present day. When did you last attend a prayer meeting when those in attendance actually prayed? I recall a revival meeting I conducted for a dying congregation in a distant city on one occasion. After a week of meetings, it was obvious that the saints needed to pray. I called for a night of prayer. I recommended that we kneel to pray, and that we continue praying until God answered.

In less than fifteen minutes, the pastor of that congregation stood and dismissed the people, telling them to go home and return the next evening. When I asked why he did that, he responded that he didn’t want to tire the people. A few people did come to faith and several of the saints did confess their own sin during the following week. However, there was no revival.

“Pray without ceasing” [**1 THESSALONIANS 5:17**] was the apostolic command. Jesus told a parable to encourage disciples to persist in prayer. Jesus said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” Notice the Master’s application of the parable He used that day. “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth” [**LUKE 18:2-8**]

Note that the fight is good (*kalòn*, and not *agathón*). The word Paul chose speaks of that which is intrinsically good and outwardly attractive, rather than merely beneficial in its effect.<sup>6</sup> Our present life is described as an “agony.” Our responsibility is to ensure that it is a “good agony.” What makes the fight good is that it is a fight of “the faith.” This identifies our struggle as being for the true Faith, not simply a fight “by” faith. John Kitchen has truthfully written, “One day when faith shall be sight, the agony will fall away like the husk from the wheat. Many will find that all they possessed in this life was the husk of agony and struggle. The believing will find that when the agony of this life falls away, life eternal continues forever, free from the battles of this world.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> W. E. Vine and F. F. Bruce, **Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words** (Revell, Old Tappan, NJ 1981) 163-4

<sup>7</sup> John A. Kitchen, **The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors** (Kress Christian Publications, The Woodlands, TX 2009) 274

**THE ETERNAL LIFE** — “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.” This is the second imperative Paul issues. The verb that has been translated “take hold of” implies that the saint is to grasp something in order to make it one’s own.<sup>8</sup> The false teachers were grasping for money; we are to seize the eternal life to which we are called.

Think of what it is that we are to “take hold of.” We Christians are to seize “the eternal life to which [we] were called.” We who know God, who are known by God, are expected to live as those who are twice-born. We are not to live for this life alone; we are to live in the light of Glory. How else shall we understand the words Paul has written to the saints in Colossae? “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” [COLOSSIANS 3:2-4].

Brothers, we need to remind ourselves that “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” [PHILIPPIANS 3:20, 21].

Listen to me: if you are living for what you can get from this life, you have a wrong perspective. If your life consists of seeking the accolades of others, your perspective is flawed. If you weigh the success or failure of your service before the Lord by what you can amass, your efforts at service are futile and your perspective is in grave error. The man of God, especially, must live in the light of eternity—his eyes fixed on the throne of Glory; and the people of God must pray for the elder, endeavouring to assist him to maintain a godly perspective.

We Christians now enjoy supernatural life. Violent men may howl and bay, threaten our lives, but we are immortal until the Master has called us home. Too many of the professed saints are looking for a life somewhere beyond this moment we call “now.” Have we actually forgotten the statement the Master made to a cadre of unbelieving Sadducees who imagined they could stump Him with an old chestnut that they had used for years to confuse the Pharisees. Here is the account as recorded by Doctor Luke.

“There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. And the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.’

“And Jesus said to them, ‘The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him’” [LUKE 20:27-38]. Focus on Jesus’ final assertion: “[God] is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.”

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<sup>8</sup> William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: a Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer’s Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Literature** (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL 1979) 295

**1 TIMOTHY 6:12**  
**FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**

The world has been shocked on multiple occasions as adherents of the Religion of Peace carry out brutal, violent executions that rival the cruelty of the Roman Empire. They act this way in the name of their blood-thirsty daemon they have named Allah. They imagine they can extirpate the Faith of Christ the Lord through their bloody sacrifices. Others have tried—and failed. Listen to the confession of one who lived life to the fullest even when facing the threat of death. The passage in reference is **PHILIPPIANS 1:12-21**.

“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

“Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

“Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

If I must face the threats of wicked people, let me heed the Apostle’s grand admonition that urges, “Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents” [**PHILIPPIANS 1:27, 28**].

If I must suffer, let me seize upon the bold truth that declares, “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” [**PHILIPPIANS 1:29**].

Let me become focused in my life, becoming obedient to the call of the message of life. “One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you” [**PHILIPPIANS 3:13-15**].

I must tell you that you shall never find joy—settled, permanent joy—in living for this dying world. The accumulation of things must one day cease, and another shall take all the baubles you have amassed. The vapid relationships that can never last beyond time will not comfort in the dying day. If that for which I live is defined by the things of this life, it shall all be left behind at death; and one thing is certain, I cannot continue in this body, nor can you. Thus, the Apostle urges, “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.”

That life to which we are called is eternal because He who gives life is eternal. Perhaps you recall the paean of praise to the True and Living God that broke forth from Paul’s heart. “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” [**1 TIMOTHY 1:17**]. That exclamation of marvel and wonder anticipated the description of the Lord God that Paul would provide near the end of this letter. “He ... is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen” [**1 TIMOTHY 6:15, 16**]. Amen, indeed.

**1 TIMOTHY 6:12**  
**FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**

The “fight” is not eternal; but the “life” is. A significant truth arises out of Paul’s words. You will remember that the verb “fight” is present tense, indicating the necessity of the struggle being continuous. Contrasted to that is the fact that the word translated into English by the phrase “take hold of” is aorist; this is indicative that the action in view is taken once and need not be repeated. We take hold of the eternal life, not through constant struggle, but rather through a singular, decisive act of faith. The life we now possess is the same life we will possess throughout eternity. We must not imagine that we have one type of life now and that we shall have another, different life in eternity.

I suggest that our great problem is that we cannot fully appreciate the life we possess as twice-born people because we are distracted by the cares of this dying world. We catch momentary glimpses of eternity as we walk with the Master, and we are awestruck. For a moment we are able to realise what we now possess; then, we are drug back into the dull routine of daily life by our own fallen natures.

My dear people, you were called to something far greater than anything we could ever imagine. Truly, the Word of God draws us to look up when it encourages, “As it is written,

‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man imagined,  
what God has prepared for those who love him’—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ‘For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” [1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-16].

I’m speaking to mere mortals. I know that you are struggling—agonising—at this present time; but your struggle is mixed with the very real and present experience of eternal life. One day that life of trial and hurt and injury and sorrow and pain and struggle and agonising as we long to do what pleases our Saviour will have been left behind. At that time, we will have entered into perfect rest. There is a day coming when none of us will ever again be compelled to “fight the good fight”; for Christ Himself shall receive us to Himself, and we shall reign with Him. Nevertheless, for this brief moment, we know we have been called into—*eis*—this life. The language teaches that we are not just called *to* this life—we are called *into* this life.

This word “called” is a second person singular verb, indicating that we are called as individuals and not as groups. The grace of our Lord Christ has brought us within the sound of the Gospel’s call. His Spirit wakened our hearts and drew us into life. The only other occurrence of this particular verb in the Pastoral Letters is found in Paul’s second letter to Timothy. “Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” [2 TIMOTHY 1:8, 9].



**THE GOOD CONFESSION** — “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” Paul says the believer “made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” Again, the verb is second person singular, indicating that this is true for each of us. The Apostle does not have in view an act that was unique to Timothy and unknown to other believers. He is writing of our shared confession. Moreover, this verb is also aorist, indicating that Paul is focused on an event that took place once rather than being an ongoing action.

The Greek verb translated “made,” *homológēsas*, and the Greek noun, *homologían*, are compound words drawn from the same root. The root conveys the meaning “to say the same thing.” In essence, Paul has written that believers have “confessed the good confession.” Because this act is not repeated, it is apparent that Paul is thinking neither of our lifestyle nor of our testimony before the world. The importance of a godly life is not depreciated by this information; rather pointing out the singular nature is acknowledgement that the focus is an event that took place at some point prior to the present.

We might wonder what the Apostle had in view; and we have a clue as to Paul’s thinking when reading the following verse. Paul writes, “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession” [1 TIMOTHY 6:13]. Therefore, in His testimony before Pontius Pilate, Jesus the Christ “made the good confession.” Thus, we should be able to discover what “the good confession” made by Christians is.

Recall the exchange between Jesus and Pilate that is recorded in John’s Gospel. “Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’ Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice’” [JOHN 18:33-37].

Jesus testified to His Kingship. He testified to His divinity and to the truth that all who are of the truth hear His voice. The good confession, then, is an act that is publicly performed once. It seems apparent to me that Paul is referring to the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. This is the public confession that accompanies baptism that is referred to in the Letter to Roman Christians. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10].

The good confession presents a strong argument for public baptism and for public confession accompanying the baptism. Baptism is not by proxy, nor is it a rite performed for infants incapable of recognising right from wrong or speaking of their faith. Baptism is a confession of faith in Christ the Lord. In baptism the believer confesses confidence that Christ died because of his or her sin, certainty that He was buried and assurance that He has been raised from the dead. The believer aligns himself or herself with the Living Saviour, confessing that they agree with God that they were dead in trespasses and sins, but that they are made alive in Christ through faith in Him.

**1 TIMOTHY 6:12**  
**FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**

The question must be asked of you: Have you made the good confession? Have you openly agreed with God since you believed? At what point did you stand before the saints, agreeing with God that you were condemned in your sins, but confessing that He has given you life in the Beloved Son? You say you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, but have you openly identified with Him as one who believes?

Hear the Word of God on this matter. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God” [**ROMANS 6:3-10**].

We do not baptise in order to make people Christians; rather, we baptise those who are Christians as a confession—an agreement with God. Have you this faith? Have you believed? Why do you wait? “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” [**ACTS 16:31**], is the testimony of the Word. Then, those who believed are openly, publicly baptised because they have believed. May God encourage His holy people. Amen.