

Fighting the Good Fight of Faith



“I have fought the good fight”

As Paul concluded the first letter to Timothy, he exhorted the young preacher to “*Fight the good fight of the faith*” (1 Tim. 6:12). Sometime later, as Paul’s own fight was drawing to an end, he wrote one last letter. Second Timothy is probably the last New Testament letter written by Paul. He was imprisoned in Rome, and he knew that soon his life would be taken from him. Death was not what vexed the old apostle’s mind: instead his concerns were for the church. Thus, he penned one last letter—another letter to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy. Second Timothy is one of the most emotional letters written by Paul. It is the apostle’s final encouragement. He is

passing the baton you might say to Timothy and to the next generation. As Paul would say, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...*” (2 Tim. 4:7). The fight and the race were almost over for Paul, but he knew the battle did not end there. Younger men like Timothy would have to continue waging the spiritual warfare in the name of King Jesus for the souls of men. And so it has been for the past two millennia. Generations must take their stand for the truth, fight the good fight, and train up the next generation to take their place when they’re gone. Second Timothy is a wondrous source of encouragement both for those nearing the end of their race, and those who must soon take over the fight. Are you fighting the good fight? Are you running the race? Are you keeping the faith?

Christian Metaphors

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul uses several metaphors to describe the Christian life. What do these metaphors teach us? How can your own faith become more like the types of professions Paul lists?

Soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4)

Athlete (2 Tim. 2:5)

Farmer (2 Tim. 2:6)

Worker (2 Tim. 2:15)

Philemon



Philemon is a short, personal letter, but it teaches us a great lesson. The exact background of the letter is unclear. Paul calls himself an old man and is apparently in prison (v. 9), but which imprisonment of Paul’s this is we can’t say for sure. During his imprisonment, Paul met a man named Onesimus. Sometime after meeting, Onesimus became a Christian (v. 10). It appears that Onesimus had been Philemon’s slave and had run away since Paul asks Philemon to welcome the man back “...no longer as a slave” (v. 16). Paul recognizes there may be other ways in which Onesimus had wronged Philemon, but he wanted Philemon to forgive the man and welcome him back as a new brother in Christ. The story of Onesimus, Paul, and Philemon then, is a wonderful one. We can only assume that Philemon, as a Christian, was the type of master Scripture commanded him to be. Why Onesimus ran away and what else he did we don’t know. But how amazing that he ran into Paul! And further, what a story of transformation. A fugitive and possibly a thief became a helpful minister to the great apostle. Paul would liked to have kept Onesimus with him, but realized the man needed to return to Philemon. Paul exhorted Philemon to be understanding and forgiving though. Just as Philemon had been saved from his sins by the gospel, so had Onesimus! Instead of receiving a returned slave, Philemon was gaining a Christian brother. This short letter reminds us of the transforming power of the gospel. The transformation is not just individual, however. It transforms our relationships. As we experience the forgiveness of Christ, we can also grant forgiveness to others. Those who once may have wronged us can actually become close family through the blood of Christ!

“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, & Philemon Personal Letters From Paul

Overview

Many of the New Testament letters were written to congregations or even groups of congregations (e.g. Romans, churches of Galatia, etc.) There are a few letters, however, that are penned to individuals. The letters of Paul which were written to individuals are the letters of First and Second Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The books of Timothy and Titus are written to younger men who had traveled with Paul and were working with various churches Paul had left them at. His letters provide encouragement and guidance in their work. These three letters are often called the Pastoral Epistles. While they are personal letters, they clearly guide Timothy and Titus in their work among the Lord’s congregations. Philemon is a friend of Paul, and the apostle writes the short letter in regards to a specific request. Somehow, a former associate or possibly run-away slave of Philemon (a man named Onesimus) had met Paul and become a Christian. Paul sends the man back to Philemon, but writes to encourage him to accept the Onesimus back on the as a new brother in Christ.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: 1 Timothy 1-3

Tuesday: 1 Timothy 4-6

Wednesday: 2 Timothy 1-4

Thursday: Titus 1-3

Friday: Philemon



Conduct in the House of God: First Timothy & Titus

Timothy and Titus were both young men who had spent time travelling with the Apostle Paul. While young, they were very gifted and extremely dedicated to the Lord’s work. Both men were loved by Paul, and he viewed them as his spiritual sons (1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). As they travelled with Paul and matured in their own leadership ability, the apostle would leave or send them to certain areas to labor. When First Timothy was written, Timothy was working with the congregation at Ephesus. Titus was working among multiple congregations on the island of Crete when Paul wrote to him. Paul’s letters to these men offered encouragement and guidance in the great work they were engaged in. Since the books have similar purposes, they are very similar letters. Both books highlight the grave need to combat false doctrine. One of the primary responsibilities of leadership is to be on the lookout for and defend against false teaching. One essential method of battling false doctrine and heresy is the establishment of congregational leadership. Timothy and Titus were not the rulers of the congregations. They were evangelists working among the leaders. Thus, they were to work to establish elders at each congregation. Both letters contain lists of qualifications for elders (1 Tim. 3 & Titus 1). The letters also provide instruction for Christian men and women, both young and old. Collectively, there isn’t a group of people in the church that can’t find instruction in these letters. They prove to be helpful for young men who are preachers or teachers today. They provide much needed insight into the qualifications of elders and deacons. And they provide every Christian with practical instruction on what it means to “*conduct yourself in the house of God!*” (1 Tim. 3:15). These books may be short, but that simply means they should be read over and over again by Christians and Church leaders who seek to honor God in their lives, families, and congregations!

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