

Title: Running and Fighting, Amen!
Text: I Timothy 6.11-16
Theme: Life that matters
Series: I Timothy
Prop Stmtnt: The leader lives in a way that reflects what really matters.

Read Text:

Practice makes _____? Study and you will get a good _____? In other words, if you do right things, you can expect good results. But what if you do right things and you don't get good results? Are the right things still right? Christianity is a religion of faith. We are promised a reward for our faith, but when we experience adversity, it is easy to give unbelief a foothold.

Today's title may seem a bit odd, but running and fighting, amen, is really just a summary of this paragraph. Running summarizes the first two commands. Fighting summarizes the second two commands and amen is our response to the weightiness and content of the final charge. The text is personal. Paul is telling Timothy that he is not like those who abuse the trust of the ministry and leverage it for their own gain. He's not like those who tell others what they want to hear because it will give them esteem and glory in the eyes of self-centered people. He is not like those who look at life and even ministry with the eyes of someone who is craving riches. Oh no. You are different. "But as for you" Paul says. In contrast to the attention-seeking, power-hungry, money-craving, people-pleasing, leaders, you are, a man of God. You are not a man of this world. You are a man of the God who created this world. The creation does not own you, you are owned by the Creator. O man OF God. God is the one who defines you. Therefore, anything that is in rebellion to God or is not in harmony with God is something you run from.

I. **Run!** (11)

A. **Run for safety.** 11a

A husband and father, so filled with hatred for his wife, shot and killed their twin daughters. He then shot his wife in the legs, so that she would not die and then killed himself. He wanted her to live with inconsolable grief. If you were friends with those 16-year-old girls and you knew that their dad was coming over to their house to kill them, you would call them, text them, anything to get them to run for their lives. "Get out of there now!" When you read this command, "flee these things" I want you to think of that. That is the force of this verb. Run away from this danger!

But wait a minute. This was their dad, right? Why should they run from their dad? Isn't a dad supposed to provide and protect? Yes, but, sadly, not this dad. Which I think helps us grasp some of the tension in previous section. Because the danger that Timothy (and us) are to run from is the false doctrine, conceit, seeking to be controversial, causing dissension, using godliness as a cover for financial gain, desiring to be rich and loving

money. But, so many of those things are what people really believe will bring them happiness. If I was envied by others, I would be happy. If I was the focus of attention because I was provocative and controversial, I would be happy. If I had all of the money to pay my bills and take trips wherever I wanted, I would be happy. Your heart and your world find all sorts of ways to convince you that being envied and envying others is good, or that loving money because of what it can do for you is good. It's counter-intuitive to accept this, and to run from these things. But flee these things. No one is an exception to the rule. As John Owen said, "Either you will be killing sin or sin will be killing you." But, just running from sin is not the goal because we are not just saved from sin, we are saved to Christ. Therefore, we are to pursue Christ. Look at what we are called to run after.

B. Pursue Christ. 11b

Instead of envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, constant friction and pursuing money, we are to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love steadfastness and gentleness. I think that these first two; righteousness and godliness speak of our relation to God. Righteousness refers to your conduct that pleases God, while godliness speaks of a life that corresponds to God. Together they refer to your manner of life that follows after God. Have you ever seen a couple of motorcycles going down the freeway? One is in front and whatever he does, the guy in back follows. That is the idea here. Our lives are to look like we are mimicking God. So, while these first two focus on conduct the next two refer to who you really are.

Faith and love are close siblings. Faith refers to our trust in God, and because of our faith in God, we are free to love others. In fact, the way that these are paired together reflects the fact that the more I believe God, the more I will be a person who truly loves others. Steadfastness and gentleness are paired together because they speak of our relation to a hostile world. This world is not a friend to grace. It is not a friend to Christ. It is not kindly to the gospel. We endure the hostility with hope because we are certain of Christ's rule, Christ's return, Christ's plan and Christ's knowledge of it all.

Ok, with that brief description of these, let's look at verses 5 and 9 and compare them to verse 11. How would those who know you best describe you? Are there things from verses 5 and 9 that you need to run from? What would that look like? Are there things that you do that stir up discontentment? Looking just at verse 11, what would it look like to pursue these things? I think one of the neglected weapons for pursuing these things, is good biographies. Read the stories of godly believers (I'll publish a list in my Wed. blog this week) whose lives will encourage you to pursue these aspects of Christ's character. The truth is, if you are a genuine follower of Christ, you took an oath of allegiance because you are in a war. There is no neutral ground in this war. We are called to fight.

II. Fight! (12)

A. Fight for faith

The verb means that you are in a struggle that will never end until you are with Christ. Fight assumes that you have opposition and adversaries. This fight for faith is a fight to believe and to keep on believing in the face of opposition. Unless an army fights, they will not win. You cannot advance on the enemy unless you are engaged in the battle. A person of faith is automatically in a fight because being a person of faith in God puts you on the enemies' hit list. As a person of faith, you believe that there is a heaven and a hell. You believe that there is a God who created everything. You believe that the Bible is from God and is true. You believe that sin is real and that sin is punished by a just and righteous God. You believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong. You believe that lying is wrong. You believe that cheating is wrong. You believe that there is only one way to God and that is through Christ. You believe, therefore, that every single person who trusts in Christ is declared righteous, and placed into the family of God and every single person who does not has no hope and if they die in that condition will spend eternity under the judgment of God. You believe that God's order for life, for gender, for marriage, for raising children, for work, ethics is absolute. You believe that abortion is murder. Now, everything that I have just said is very offensive to many in our world. This labels you as an enemy. You are in a war. And what this war does is it exposes what you really believe because it looks like you are outnumbered by the enemy. But the war is not just with the world, it is with our own hearts. We fight for faith when we choose in the moment, not to click a link that we know is not good because we believe again that Christ is our true delight. We fight for faith when we choose in the moment, not to retaliate when wronged because we believe again that Christ is our advocate. We fight for faith when in the moment we choose to be honest, even though we may look bad, because we believe that Christ is worth honoring with the truth. We fight for faith when we choose to read our Bibles instead of checking of Facebook because we believe that what God has to say is more needful for my soul than anything else in my world. Fighting for faith is an all-out resistance against a relentless enemy who is coming after you from all angles.

On November 25, 1950 Ralph Pucket, a Ranger in the Army, led 50 other soldiers on a daring mission where they captured a strategic hill in Korea that overlooked the Chongchon River. This group of soldiers was over a mile from reinforcements. During the course of the night, this small band of soldiers fought back six waves of attacks by the enemy. For four and half hours, either they stood their ground, or they died. Pucket was wounded by grenade fragments and then twice more when mortars landed in his fox hole. Pucket was eventually evacuated, but not before his band of brothers held the hill. I have a chance to hear Ralph Pucket speak in a couple of weeks, and perhaps meet him. His example on the battlefield is exactly the kind of tenacity that Paul is speaking of in our fight of faith. You are assaulted by waves of unbelief. Hold your ground, it is worth it. It is worth it because the enemy cannot win. The cross and the empty tomb signed his death certificate. That is why we are not only to fight for faith, that is fight to maintain what we believe in spite of the assault, but the next phrase speaks of one of the aspects of the fight for faith.

B. Make it your own.

Timothy's mom and grandmother were believers. They had an influence on him and it sounds as if he was raised in an atmosphere where he heard the gospel (2 Tim 1.5). As good as that is, the question always arises, "do I believe this because I believe this, or do I believe this because this is all that I know?"

Look at the wording in v.12. When Paul says, "Take hold of the eternal life" he is saying for Timothy to make it his own. You have to believe this. Yes, this is what your grandmother believed and your mother believed, but they cannot believe for you. You have to believe this. Now, Timothy has been placed into this adversity and while adversity is not fun, adversity reveals the authenticity of my belief.

For example, let's say that you were raised in a Christian home. You never remember not hearing about the gospel. You professed faith in Christ at a young age and of course, your parents and other family members were thrilled. But, as the years have gone on, the memories of that day are pretty vague. You hate to admit to your parents, because you fear that it will make them feel bad, but the truth is, you hardly remember anything and in fact you have this nagging concern if back then you even had any real idea of what the gospel was, or were simply doing something that you knew you were supposed to do. Up until this point Christianity has been convenient because it has been part of your cultural experience. You've liked your friends and activities at church. Most everyone is nice, but do you really believe it? You may really believe it, and then again, you may not. How do you know unless your faith is tested? What people are afraid of is adversity. But, adversity can be a gift, because in adversity it is not convenient to believe. When you discover that in the midst of adversity you believe, then at that moment, you really know that this gospel is yours. However, if the adversity reveals a heart of unbelief, then the game is over. And there is a sense of relief from the charade at least. But you also know that you have no real conviction about the gospel. It may be your parents' belief, but it is not your own.

By the way parents, do you see why you cannot shelter your children from adversity all of their lives? I think that there is a relationship between fighting for belief and making it your own because making it your own is never going to come without a crisis.

Jay's dad was one of my Sunday School teachers. Jay's mother was a cook at my church camp. Jay's brother was a faithful believer. Jay was dealing drugs. By his middle teens he was in deep. He was good at what he did, but he was also using. The gospel he was raised with, the loving father, mother, brother and sister, all of it was lost on him, so it seemed. One night around his 18th birthday, Jay was standing out on a country road in Northeastern Ohio. There wouldn't be a car or truck for a few hours. Jay stood there and looked down the road, and then he saw, what looked like a vision of hell. When he looked the other way, there was a cross. Neither were actually there, but to Jay, they might as well have been because he was coming to what he thought was a point of no return. For a number of reasons, he was at a crossroads. He really believed it was now or never. It might have been. That night he walked toward the cross and to my knowledge, has never turned back. It became his own.

To Timothy, or to anyone for that matter, life is full of adversity. God is not an inflatable that you get into who helps you bounce off of trouble without being affected by it. You are in this world. You are deeply affected by grief, loss, betrayal, loss and disappointment. Is the gospel an attempt to find comfort, or do you believe the gospel because Christ is all glorious and is truly worth the affection of your heart? You have to come to that. No one can believe for you. You have to make it your own.

The commitment that Timothy made was confirmed in front of many witnesses. What was that? Was it his confession of faith at his baptism? Or is Paul referring to when Timothy was set apart for the ministry. That would have been similar to what we call an ordination, or it may have been the church's recognition of God's calling on Timothy to partner with Paul and be a pastor under his tutelage. Either way, Paul is charging Timothy to remember what he professed. Remember what you said your convictions and commitments were. Do you still believe it? If so, then stand on it and don't move. Timothy is called to fight for faith and fight for the faith, by remembering what he confessed, which was based on what Christ confessed in his first coming. Now the focus shifts from looking back and remembering what Timothy confessed to looking at Christ and what he confessed and looking forward to his return.

III. **Amen!** (13-16)

Here is another reason why you run and keep running and fight and keep fighting.

A. **Your charge is weighty.** (13)

I charge, I command, I direct, I order you (v.14, to keep the commandment). But, before he says, Paul reminds Timothy of the witnesses that he is invoking. Our charge to keep the commandment (that I will explain in a second) is a weighty charge because it is given in the presence of God (who gives life to all things, speaking of his absolute and final authority and power). And of Christ Jesus, who is not only the Son of God, but who became the Son of man and when he was facing the greatest opposition that anyone has ever faced, fulfilled his charge!

Christ's confession was his answer to Pilate who asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" By answering as he did, he sealed his fate and ended up being sentenced to death. Christ chose to answer that question knowing that it would cost him his life, but also knowing that it would fulfill his mission. The mission of Christ secured our salvation and every gift that comes with it. One of the gifts of our salvation is persevering faith. You may not realize that you have it, until right at the moment you need it, but Christ secured that for you. It may be granted to you to suffer for Christ, but with that gift of suffering comes the gift of perseverance.

B. **Your charge is a command.** (14)

The charge is to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach. "The commandment" is a summary of the Christian faith. The Christian faith refers to the truth

of the gospel that we are to believe and that we are to keep believing. The evidence of our belief is seen in how we persevere in the faith and live under the Lordship of Christ.

If you know someone who “prayed to receive Jesus” at a young age and has no affection for God, no conviction of sin, no desire for holiness, no tenderness to the Holy Spirit, no love for the people of God and whose life is virtually indistinguishable from those who do not know Christ, do not think that their soul is safe. Faithfulness is the evidence of faith. A person who professes faith, or a minister (like Timothy) who is not faithful, will bring reproach on the gospel and give people more excuses not to believe. But, this charge, while it is our duty and there is great honor in fulfilling your charge, is going to be SO worth it. Paul knows that one day Christ will return and the glorious appearing of Christ will be beyond anything that we really can adequately imagine.

C. **Your charge is glorious.** (15-16)

Little children tend to get very happy or very upset about things that really do not matter. Part of parenting is helping our children learn what is worth giving affection to and what isn't. You know that years later your child will not remember that soccer game or basketball game. They will likely forget that they were not invited to a birthday party, or missed an event because they were sick. Things that in the moment seem so important often are not. That is not only true for children; it is also true for us. At this point in his life, Paul realizes what has worth and what doesn't and who has worth. Timothy would be tempted to be anxious about some of these people in the church who were stirring up trouble for him. Timothy had to deal with this opposition and had to confront it, and this was hard. It always is, isn't it?

There are situations, and most likely issues with some other people, that you need to deal with and you really do not want to. You fear the consequences. You fear causing people to be angry with you and creating controversy. And yet, the problem is not going to go away. You have to face it and deal with it. That is the case with Timothy. He has confronted the situation at Ephesus and deal with it. At this point, Paul points Timothy to the reason why faithfulness is so worth it. That reason is this: Christ is returning! And at this point, Paul starts laying on all of these adjectival phrases that pile up, starting with, “the blessed.” To be blessed means in part to be happy, but it is more. Blessed is the sense of being full of joy because everything is full and complete.

Our Savior blessed. Our Savior is full of happiness, full of joy, full of satisfaction and is coming to share that with us. And what he shares is more than you can handle. Your cup will overflow. On that day when Christ returns, when you are with him, your cup will overflow because Christ has all happiness and he freely shares it with his own. This Savior, overflowing with happiness is also the Sovereign. He is the ONLY Sovereign. He is the King over every king who has ever ruled and the Lord over every lord who has ever had a charge. There is none who compares to him, none who rivals him. He has no competition. He is in a league all his own.

He alone has immortality and he alone dwells in unapproachable light. He possesses eternal life and freely shares it with those who trust him, but at the same time, we will always be creation and he will always be Creator. No mortal can look directly at the face of our unveiled and all glorious Christ and live. His glory will forever be a source of awe and worship. We will never get used to dwelling in the presence of God. On that day, when we are basking in this light, filled with his delight, realizing that this will never end, on that day, every act of faith, every fight against unbelief, every fulfillment of our charge to faithfulness, will be worth it. Do you believe this? That is part of the fight for faith. And you fight by hearing the gospel preached Sunday after Sunday. You fight by worshipping with the body. You fight by encouraging one another and praying for one another. Some days you believe it more than others, which is why we so desperately need one another. Because this is reality that will define all others. Christ will return!

So, what do you say to that? If you grasp this truth on any level, it will cause a response. Seriously, if this reality of the glorious return and appearance of Christ does not move you, then do not think you are a follower of Christ. This reality is what we live for. This is it! And the reality of Christ's return does more than demand a response, it causes a response! To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. It is so! It is certain! It is true!