

1 Timothy 6:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Analysis

Fight the good fight of faith (ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως, agōnizou ton kalon agōna tēs pisteōs)—'fight the good fight of the faith.' Agōnizomai means to contend, struggle, compete—used of athletic contests and military battles. Agōn means contest, struggle, fight. Kalos means good, noble, beautiful. Faith involves struggle—against sin, Satan, false teaching, cultural pressure.

Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called (ἐπιλαβοῦ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, εἰς ἣν ἐκλήθης, epilabou tēs aiōniou zōēs, eis hēn eklēthēs)—'take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.' Epilambanomai means to seize, grasp, take hold of. Not earning eternal life, but actively appropriating it by faith. **And hast professed a good profession before many witnesses** (καὶ ὡμολόγησας τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν ἐνώπιον πολλῶν μαρτύρων, kai hōmologēsas tēn kalēn homologian enōpion pollōn martyron)—'and confessed the good confession before many witnesses.' Likely Timothy's baptism or ordination, when he publicly confessed faith.

Christian life is spiritual warfare requiring active engagement—fight faith's fight, seize eternal life, maintain your confession. Paul uses vigorous verbs: fight, seize, confess. No passivity, no coasting—press forward in faith.

Historical Context

Athletic imagery was familiar to Paul's readers—Greek culture celebrated games where athletes competed for wreaths. Military metaphors also resonated in the Roman Empire. Paul combines both: Christian life is a contest requiring discipline and a battle requiring courage. Timothy must actively fight for faith, not passively hope it continues. The 'many witnesses' of his confession hold him accountable to persevere.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does 'fighting the good fight of faith' look like practically—what are we fighting?
2. How do we 'lay hold of eternal life' when salvation is by faith, not works?
3. What role does public confession play in sustaining faithfulness over time?

Interlinear Text

ἀγωνίζου	τὸν	καλὴν	ἀγῶνα	τῆς	πίστεως	ἐπιλαβοῦ	τῆς
Fight G75	G3588	a good G2570	fight G73	G3588	of faith G4102	lay hold on G1949	G3588
αἰωνίου	ζωῆς	εἰς	ἣν	καὶ	ἐκλήθης	καὶ	ὡμολόγησας
eternal G166	life G2222	whereunto G1519	G3739	also G2532	called G2564	also G2532	hast professed G3670
τὴν	καλὴν	ὁμολογίαν	ἐνώπιον	πολλῶν	μαρτύρων		
G3588	a good G2570	profession G3671	before G1799	many G4183	witnesses G3144		

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 1:18 (Good): This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

1 Peter 5:10 (Eternal Life): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

2 Timothy 4:7 (Faith): I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

1 Timothy 6:13 (Witness): I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

Hebrews 6:18 (Parallel theme): That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Revelation 3:3 (Parallel theme): Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Colossians 3:15 (Parallel theme): And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

1 John 2:25 (Eternal Life): And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

Zechariah 10:5 (Parallel theme): And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

1 Timothy 6:19 (Eternal Life): Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.