

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Pentecost 5
June 28, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Dan Pautz
Fight the good fight of faith

—1 Timothy 6:11-16

¹¹But you, O man of God, flee from these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of eternal life, to which you were called and about which you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who made a good confession as a witness before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep this command without spot and without fault, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will make known at the proper time—the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or is able to see. To him be honor and power forever! Amen.

These verses have a special meaning for me. For one thing it was written by Paul to Timothy who was a young pastor who was likely in the late 20's or early 30's of age. Obviously, I am 5-6 decades older than what Timothy was, but it has much application for me. The second reason why this section is so special to me is that these were the verses for the sermon that was preached for my son Troy's funeral about a year and a half ago. The theme for that service and for this service are among Paul's closing words to Timothy, **Fight the good fight of faith**.

What were among the last words your parents said to you when they had to leave for a while or when you were leaving for military duties or to an out-of-state school? When I went to a boarding school, many parents as they left their teens said things such as they loved them and would miss them. Usually, the closing words of my parents could be summed up with the statement, "Now behave yourself." I knew my parents loved me, but they wanted to make sure that I behaved. Paul's closing words to the young pastor Timothy were "Fight the Good Fight of Faith".

The Holy Spirit brought Timothy to faith. His mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois taught him the Holy Scriptures. Several days ago, a native American told me how his grandmother Bernice and mother Beatrice made sure he learned the message of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has Brought you to faith in Jesus. Faith is the precious gift that brings forgiveness, salvation, and heaven. It is worth fighting for. As tragic as it would be to lose your house or your job or your income or the big game, it is more tragic to lose your faith. My son Troy although he fought hard, yet nevertheless lost the battle against non-Hodgkins's lymphoma, but he won the fight that matters. He did not lose his faith in Jesus. He won the battle.

Remember this is a fight. Fight the good fight of faith. The first thing in fighting is having a strong faith. God does not want you to be a spiritual wimp. Now to get a strong faith is not a matter of somehow or other pulling yourself up by your spiritual bootstraps. The Holy Spirit who brought you to faith keeps you in faith and strengthens that faith through His Word and communion. A vital part of the battle is that you hear God's Word and attend communion. The words "I don't need to hear God's Word to remain strong" is devil's talk.

Who are you fighting? Who are enemies of your faith. The DFW gang, the devil, our flesh which is our sinful nature and the unbelieving world. You are in a struggle, a fight. At stake are forgiveness and eternal life. Shame on you and on me if we don't take care of God's gift of faith. This fight is not over until we die. It is a lifelong battle.

There are several reasons why Paul told Pastor Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. If Timothy fell from faith or his faith became weak or if he taught false doctrine or committed the type of sins which would disqualify him from being a pastor, it would affect not only Timothy but also his ministry to precious blood-bought souls. Paul urged the young shepherd to be faithful not only for his sake but for the sheep of the flocks to which he was to minister.

Fight the good fight of faith for your sake and for the sake of others. Those words are for all of us, young and old alike, new to the faith or veteran Christians, pastors and teachers too. Do you know that in our congregation there are over a dozen Lutheran pastors, some who are actively serving as pastors, others no longer. There are well over 40 men and women who are serving or who have served as teachers in our Lutheran schools. None of us are immune from attacks upon our faith in Jesus. The devil seeks hard to derail these pastors and teachers and leaders in our congregation along with parents of children. We have targets on our back. If any should stray, it affects not only them but also the congregation and their family. If the shepherd falls from faith or becomes guilty of terrible types of sins, it hurts the sheep. Pastor Timothy along with all called workers in congregations today have the same kind of sinful nature as others. Sinful natures do not come in different sizes, small, medium, large and extra-large.

We called workers come to church to hear God's Word for the strengthening of our faith and to give public worship. We don't skip over the words at the beginning part of the service in which we confess that we are sinners for we too are sinners. We come to Jesus the Savior. We come to communion for forgiveness and for strength as we fight the good fight of faith. We fight for our sake and also for the sake of those under our spiritual care.

Among the directions that the Holy Spirit gives in fighting the good fight of faith, believe it or not, is to flee. That does not seem to add up. If I am to fight, should I be fleeing? And the answer is yes. Let's use a comparison. You could be very physically fit, you could be a tough person, you could be a smart person with all sorts of degrees but there is something you for sure will flee from. Should you happen to stir up a wasp nest or a beehive, you are going to flee. And as fast you can! It was about 15 years ago that Ginger and I were walking in the cemetery of St. John's Lutheran Church in Maribel, Wisconsin where many Pautz relatives were buried. Somehow or other we stirred up a nest of bumble bees. We did not hang around. We did flee. "Run, Ginger, run." She escaped being stung, but I did not.

Paul wrote, **O man of God, flee from these things**. What things? What should we flee from? False teachings, Quick temper, a belittling tongue, adulterous thoughts, hate and discord, lame excuses for not coming to church. Yes, we are to flee from all these things but more. In the verses right before our sermon text, Paul was speaking about the subject of money. But he did not say flee from money as if Christians should be against money. Money is a gift from the Lord, ordinarily the result of our work. Here is what he said, **For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evils. By striving for money, some have wandered away from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains**. It's the love of money from which we are to flee. Greed, coveting, begrudging, making money more important than God. One person said, "Well. Money isn't everything but it is way ahead of what is in second place." Jesus said, **You cannot serve God and money**. God is first. God has blessed us with many possessions and much money. Most of the World Cup soccer players are amazed at many things about America such as how friendly we are and how well-off we are. And we are well off! Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Flee, run away. But we are instructed to pursue something. **Pursue righteousness** Often the word righteousness refers to the righteousness of Jesus. We are told, **Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness**. Jesus led a perfect righteous life as our Substitute. His righteousness becomes ours through faith. In turn, He suffered and died for our sins. Pontius Pilate is mentioned in our reading. A fantastic hymn is titled "Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness, My Beauty Are, My Glorious Dress."

But the righteousness we are told to pursue is the righteous life. **Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness**. Lead the life of faith.

Fighting the good fight of faith is a serious matter. So serious is it that Timothy was told – and these words apply to you. **I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who made a good confession as a witness before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this command without spot and without fault, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will make known at the proper time—the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or is able to see.**

Fighting the good fight of faith is not shadow boxing. It is not like a game in which no score is kept. This is serious business. There are no do overs. This is not a dress rehearsal. This is not practice for the big game. This is not a walk through. There is no reincarnation. There are no second chances or play agains. This is it. Then comes death and eternity.

Take comfort in that The Lord wants you to win this fight. Remember these words from a Reformation hymn, "But for us fights the valiant one whom God Himself elected." That one who fights for us is Jesus. Think of the first line of another hymn. "Be Still My Soul, the Lord is on your side."

Through Him you win the battle and will be with Him forever in heaven.