

# 1 Timothy 6:12 Commentary

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GODLINESS AND PASTORAL CARE

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Another Overview Chart - [1 Timothy](#) - Charles Swindoll

THE PASTOR'S PRIMER: PAUL'S PRACTICAL PASTORAL INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE LOCAL CHURCH				
1 Timothy 1	1 Timothy 2-3	1 Timothy 4	1 Timothy 5	1 Timothy 6
TIMOTHY'S CHARGE...	TIMOTHY'S INSTRUCTIONS...			
Concerning Sound Doctrine	Concerning Prayer & Church	Concerning Last Days Apostasy	Concerning Widows & Elders	Concerning Conflict & Contentment
Danger of False Doctrine	Public Worship Church Officers	Antidote for Apostasy	Pastoral Duties Toward Others	Instructions for the Man of God
Warning	Worship	Wisdom	Widows	Wealth
Written in Macedonia Circa 62-64AD				

1 Timothy 6:12: **Fight** the good fight of faith; **take hold** of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [agonizou](#) (2SPMM) [ton kalon agona tes pisteos](#). [epilabou](#) (2SAMM) [tes aioniou zoes](#). [eis en eklethes](#) (2SAPI) [kai homologesas](#) (2SAAI) [ten kalen homologian enopion pollon marturon](#).

**Amplified:** Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold of the eternal life to which you were summoned and [for which] you confessed the good confession [of faith] before many witnesses. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ESV:** 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

**KJV:** Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.

**Moffatt:** Fight in the good fight of the faith, secure that life eternal to which you were called when you voiced the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

**Montgomery:** Keep contending in the noble contest of the faith; seize hold on eternal life, to which you were called when you confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

**NLT:** Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** . Fight the worthwhile battle of the faith, keep your grip on that life eternal to which you have been called, and to which you boldly professed your loyalty before many witnesses ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**TLB:** Fight on for God. Hold tightly to the eternal life that God has given you and that you have confessed with such a ringing confession before many witnesses.

**Weymouth:** Exert all your strength in the honourable struggle for the faith; lay hold of the Life of the Ages, to which you were called, when you made your noble profession of faith before many witnesses.

**Wuest:** Be constantly engaging in the contest of the Faith, which contest is marked by its beauty of technique. Take possession of the eternal life into a participation of which you were called and concerning which you gave testimony to your agreement with the good profession [you made] in the presence of many witnesses.

**Young's Literal:** Be striving the good strife of the faith, be laying hold on the life age-during, to which also thou wast called, and didst profess the right profession before many witnesses.

#### FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH: agonizou (2SPMM) ton kalon agona tes pisteos:

- **Fight.** 1Ti 1:18. Zech 10:5. 1Co 9:25, 26. 2Co 6:7, 2Cor 10:3-5. Eph 6:10-18. 1Th 5:8, 9. 2Ti 2:3, 2Ti 4:7. Jude 3
- **Fight of faith.** Php 1:30
- [1 Timothy 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Keep the context in mind as you study this passage. In Chapter 6 Paul continues to advise his young disciple Timothy regarding his ministry to various kinds of believers in the church (e.g., slaves and masters = 1Ti 6:1-2, those advocating a different doctrine = 1Ti 6:3-5, those who are rich or want to be rich = 1Ti 6:6-10). In light of the truths about the danger of pursuit of riches Paul commands Timothy...

But **flee** from these things, you man of God; and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1Ti 6:11).

In light of Paul's use of several several commands, the atmosphere of this section takes on a "military flavor." Also as discussed more below, Paul used words that were used in secular Greek in a military setting -- "Fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12). "I charge you" (1 Ti 6:13 = same military term in 1Ti 1:3). "Charge them that are rich" (1Ti 6:17KJV). "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you" (1Ti 6:20). It is as if Paul was the "general", giving Timothy orders from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Commander in Chief! Indeed, these are "marching orders" for all those who are soldiers of Christ Jesus (2Ti 2:3, 4-note).

### PAUL'S CHARGE TO ALL DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

**Fight the good fight of faith** - As explained in more detail below, one could paraphrase Paul's charge to "compete in the good competition of the faith." "Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NAB) "Strive earnestly [in] the good conflict of faith ('combat of the faith')." (Darby) "Be striving the good strife of the faith." (Young's Literal)

**The International Children's Bible** is more interpretative...

Keeping your faith is like running a race. Try as hard as you can to win. Be sure you receive the life that continues forever. You were called to have that life. And you confessed the great truth about Christ in a way that many people heard. ([See comment](#) below regarding the interpretation suggested by this paraphrase.)

It is notable that **Paul** does not command Timothy to do something he has not done, for at the end of his life he writes...

**I have fought** (agonizomai) **the good fight** (agon), I have finished the course (race), I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2Ti 4:7-note, 2Ti 4:8-note)

**THOUGHT:** Father, emblazon those words "in the future there is laid up for [us] the crown of righteousness" on our heart and mind and soul and spirit, so that we are emboldened and empowered (by Your Spirit) to fight on no matter how difficult the battle is in this short time on earth. In Christ. Amen.

**Hendriksen** says: The admonition, "Fight the noble fight of the faith; take hold of that everlasting life to which you were called," does not imply that Timothy was remiss or lax in carrying out his religious duties. Every believer needs this admonition every day. A timid nature like Timothy, confronted with determined and subtle opponents, is especially in need of it. (Borrow [Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles](#))

**Guthrie** observes: The command to fight (agonizo, 'to contend for a prize') is generally supposed to be an allusion to the Olympic Games and this seems supported by the cognate use of the noun agon. White thinks the expression had by now become stereotyped as an athletic metaphor, but Simpson claims that a military meaning is also present. Whether in contest or in conflict, the verb implies a disciplined struggle (Col. i. 29), and its tense shows that the striving is a continuous process. (Borrow [The pastoral epistles : an introduction and commentary](#))

**Fight** (75) (**agonizomai from agon** = conflict or the place of assembly for the athletic contests and then a reference to the contests which were held there) means to exert oneself as in a military setting or an athletic contest, and so to fight, to labor fervently, to make every effort, to **strive** (devote serious effort or energy = implies great exertion against great difficulty and also suggesting persistent effort), to make a great and tenacious effort to strive in a task, to struggle, to contend with an adversary.

Here are the 8 uses of **agonizomai** in the NT (**Meditation** on these would be a very fruitful study!) - Lk 13:24-note; Jn 18:36; 1Co 9:25-note; Col 1:29-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Ti 4:10; 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 4:7-note - **NAS** translates agonizomai as - competes in the games(1), fight(1), fighting(1), fought(1), laboring earnestly(1), strive(2), striving(1).

In short, with his use of **agonizomai**, Paul chose a Greek verb which vividly pictures and calls for earnest endeavor, as one needs to exert in a life and death struggle against **serious, deadly** opposition. All believers have been transferred from their former empty, vain "civilian" life in the kingdom of darkness and are now in the kingdom of light (Acts 26:18, Col 1:13-note, 1Pe 2:9-note, 1Th 5:4, 5-note, cp Isa 9:2-note, Isa 60:1), called to serve as soldiers (2Ti 2:3,4-note) of the Captain of the Hosts of Jehovah (Joshua 5:14, cp "Captain of their salvation" = Heb 2:10KJV, Rev 19:11-14-note), the Lord Jesus Christ, our new King and Commander in Chief. In this very real spiritual struggle (war), the opponents are not so much flesh and blood (cp Eph 6:12-note, 2Cor 10:3-5-note), but are a powerful triumvirate (association of three) of largely invisible opponents -- the **world** ("Society apart from God!"), the **flesh** (The indwelling "Anti-God energy" still present even in believers, that anti-God tendency all inherit from Adam) and the **devil**! (All three are described in Eph 2:1, 2-note Ep 2:3-note). Christ's death, burial and resurrection overcame the **world** (Jn 16:33; Gal. 6:14-note, 1Jn 5:4), and the **flesh** (Ro 6:4-5-note; Ro 6:6-note, Gal 2:20-note), and the **devil** (Heb 2:14, 15-note). Now as believers, we do not fight so much **for** victory, but we fight **from** victory, the Victory of Christ at Calvary! Now the Spirit of Christ indwells us (Ro 8:9-note), enabling us (eg, Ro 8:13-note, Eph 3:16-note, Gal 5:16-note, Gal 5:17-note), by faith (by faith that obeys - see the Obedience of faith), to appropriate Christ's victory over our three mortal foes (cp "take hold of the eternal life" below). This is the contest, the competition, the war to which Paul was calling Timothy, and all who would seek to live as more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us enough to die for us (Ro 8:37KJV-note). Note that Paul does not say "fight the good fight" with other believers! Sadly, too often that is the case, which must surely grieve our Lord!

**Agonizomai** is in the **present tense** suggests a never ending struggle (until Christ returns) which in turn emphasizes our need for ceaseless labor and struggle against all manner of setbacks and opposition. "Keep on straining every muscle and nerve in the noble straining for the faith!" Little wonder we often grow weary in the war! Yes, we will all have setbacks. Sometimes we fail to surrender our rights and walk by the Spirit and our internal enemy, the **flesh**, gets the "upper hand" and we seek to gratify our flesh, rather than to please our Father! At these times of "defeat", the **devil**, the inveterate, intractable enemy of our souls, the hater of God and of everything holy, will often fling fiery missiles at our mind - accusatory thoughts, thoughts of discouragement, despair, defeat, disillusionment, depression, disbelief, and the list goes on and on. Our mind becomes a veritable "battlefield" and lies become the

enemy's deadly effective artillery -- saying things like "You're not really so holy after all are you? Look at what you just said or did! You're not really a child of the King! You call yourself a believer and look at how you have behaved (etc, etc)" Yes we are guilty and yes we should be ashamed, but we must not remain in that state. Yes, we will fall and we will fail, but God's Word of Truth never fails and His truth deflects and defeats the enemies lying tactics (cp the shield of faith remembering faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of Christ -Eph 6:16-note, Ro 10:17-note).

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE A TRUTH STRUGGLE!

We must continually remember that the spiritual war is not so much a **physical struggle** as it is a **truth struggle**! And the battlefield is our mind! It is at times like these, and as the Holy Spirit prompts us and enables us, that we need to come running to our Father and confess our sins and seek His gift of repentance to enable us to turn from that sin (1John 1:9-note, Pr 28:13-note, cp Ro 2:4-note, Acts 3:19). As one ancient saint has written *"If thou hast fallen into sin through violent temptations, seek speedily for repentance for it, recovery out of it, and reformation from it."* Don't let the enemy tell you that you do not have the "right" to run to God or that you don't deserve that privilege. Although in one sense, he is correct that in our own merit, we don't have the "right", but based on the precious, once for all shed, all sufficient, eternal blood of Christ, we do have that right. And we come to the Father through our Mediator (1Ti 2:5, Heb 9:15-note), our Great High Priest Christ Jesus (Heb 1:3-note = "He made purification for sins", Heb 2:17-note, Heb 2:18-note, Heb 3:1-note, Heb 4:14, 15-note, Heb 4:16-note, Heb 7:26-note, Heb 9:11-note), and we bow and in humility, with a broken and contrite heart over our sin (Ps 51:17-note), we confess our sin to Him (2Sa 12:13-note, 2Sa 24:10 - "Is your heart troubled today?" -there could be many factors but if it is sin, confess it immediately so that you might be enabled to fight the good fight of faith!, 1Chr 21:8, Ps 41:4, Ps 51:4, compare Micah 7:9 with Micah 7:18, 19! The prodigal son Lk 15:18, 19, 20, 21. In contrast to David while Saul said "I have sinned" but there is no evidence of a broken and contrite heart 1Sa 15:30. Likewise with Judas - Mt 27:4!). Based on the fact that our Father is **faithful** (you can always trust Him) and **just** (He always does what is right), He forgives us and cleanses us from **all** unrighteousness (don't let the devil deceive you into thinking that you receive only partial cleansing!). On the basis of these truths (which counter the enemy's lies), you can arise, shine (Isa 60:1, Eph 5:14-note) and walk forth, prepared and empowered to fight the good fight of faith!

## DEAR SOLDIER OF CHRIST: NO FURLOUGH IN THIS LIFE!

Notice also that **fight** is not a suggestion but a **command** as indicated by the **present imperative** (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). One might paraphrase it as a charge to "Keep on keeping on in the spiritual struggle." "Keep fighting." "Keep competing." Make this the habitual practice of your life, day in, day out!" (**Corollary**: Its always too soon to quit! Don't give up! Heaven will be here sooner than most of us can imagine!) The implication is that this fight or race or competition or warfare is lifelong and calls for a lifelong commitment to fight, run, compete or war successfully! There will be **no "furloughs"** in this conflict. Our enemy never takes time out, but continually seeks to defeat us and trip us up (e.g., see 1Peter 5:8-note)

**A W Pink** agrees writing that "The life of faith is a "fight" (1 Timothy 6:12), a warfare in which there are no furloughs or "vacations," and our success therein depends upon renouncing our own strength, and counting solely on the sufficiency of Christ's grace. ([Faith as an Overcomer](#))

## GOD'S COMMANDS ALWAYS INCLUDE HIS ENABLEMENTS

A "**divine axiom**" all believers must remember and rely upon (i.e., trust, believe) is the truth that **what God commands** (as given here through His apostle Paul), **He always enables**. **How does He enable our obedience to His commands?** Ask yourself "Would I in my own strength desire or seek to obey God's commands?" **Beware of self-reliance!** You need to jettison all hope you might have that the flesh can ever accomplish anything supernatural and pleasing to God. Jesus alluded to this in His comments to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed, warning them to "**Keep watching and praying** (Both verbs are **present imperative** see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), that you may not enter into temptation (**Ed**: Which they did, as in fear they deserted Him, making the point that they could obey His commands in their own strength!); the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (Mt 26:41-note). **So how can we obey the divine commands?** Not by relying on our strength or resolve, but by yielding to, trusting in, relying upon the Holy Spirit, Who lives within each believer. It is the Spirit Who alone can give us the **desire** and the **power** to obey, but in the mystery of God, we still need to **make the choice** to obey. Paul describes this mysterious relationship of **God's part (His provision)** and **our part (Our responsibility)** in Philippians writing...

**Work out (present imperative)** your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will (**giving us the desire**) and to work (**giving us the power**) for His good pleasure. (Php 2:12-note, Php

2:13-note)

(See "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)")

**Comment:** Notice the little preposition "for" (there are several thousand "for's" in Scripture!) and if the context indicates, as it does in this passage, that the "for" is a term of explanation (see discussion of **term of explanation**), pause and ask yourself what is the Spirit seeking to explain? (In fact, stop reading right now and observe the passage and see if you can determine what Paul is explaining. Now you can begin to practice this simple technique every time you encounter a term of explanation. **I guarantee it will rejuvenate your "Read Through the Bible in a Year" program!** You might even get a small journal and begin to keep notes on what the Spirit illuminates and how this truth can be applied to your daily life. As you practice this technique, what you are beginning to learn how to **read the Bible inductively** and also how to **meditate** (see also **Primer on Biblical Meditation**) on the Scripture, a vanishing discipline in our fast paced world, but one which God gives you His sure promise of untold blessing (cp the promises in Joshua 1:8-note, Ps 1:1-note, Ps 1:2-note, Ps 1:3-note)!

See the same powerful "juxtaposed" principle of **God's provision** and **man's responsibility** in **Ezekiel 36:27** which is a promise associated with the New Covenant, which all NT believers have entered. **What is God's promise in Ezekiel 36:27? What is my responsibility in that passage? Do you see how "you can't", unless "He did", so to speak?** That is, disciples of Christ cannot live a supernatural life or fight a supernatural fight without His Spirit's supernatural enablement (cp Jn 15:5). Beloved, if you have not yet memorized, Php 2:12, 13 and Ezekiel 36:27, I would strongly encourage you to add these great truths to your spiritual artillery which will be useful in your battle against Satan's subtle lies (**Remember how Jesus deflected Satan's temptations** - read Mt 4:1-11, 4, 7, 10, Luke 4:1-14 - Notice Jesus was full of the Spirit - what you are filled with controls you! [Cp Eph 5:18-note]. Notice especially Jesus' source of power [dunamis] for ministry in Lk 4:14 - Jesus as the perfect God Man showed us the perfect example of how we also can walk and live this supernatural life [There is in fact no other way!] - filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit! Cp 1Pe 2:21-note, 1Jn 2:6)! Over 25 years ago I began memorizing Scripture and have found no spiritual discipline which has had greater impact (and fruit) in my Christian walk! Everything else flows from His Word -- praying His Word, filling one's self with His Word which facilitates filling with His Spirit (**compare** the clear parallels in Col 3:16ff-note and Eph 5:18ff-note), intake of His Word is used by the Spirit to transform us from glory to glory (2Cor 3:18-note where "mirror" ~ His Word), there is no spiritual growth without the spiritual Word (1Pe 2:2-note), and the list goes on! As one of my old medical school professors used to say **You can't not know!**" I would paraphrase it (under grace), saying **"You can't not memorize!"** And don't say you are too old, for I am in my late 70's! (See related topics: Memorizing God's Word; Memory Verses by Topic -consider book marking to facilitate review)

**Agonizomai** was a familiar term in writings of both military and athletic endeavors and was used to emphasize the concentration, discipline, conviction, and effort needed to win in both arenas. This verb pictures a runner straining every nerve to the uttermost towards the goal. **Agonizomai** was used in secular Greek meaning to **contend** for the prize on the stage, describing poets and actors which indicates agonizomai was not just a physical but an intellectual "fight." **Agonizomai** was used of public speaking where it was a legal term meaning to **contend against**, and so to **fight** a cause to the last or to **fight** against a charge of murder.

The gloves of the Greek boxer were fur lined on the inside, but on the outside were made of ox-hide sewn with lead and iron. The loser in a match would have his eyes gouged out. These stark realities of the Grecian games give us some appreciation of the motivation Paul was seeking to give to his young protégée (and to all Christ followers)!

As alluded to above, **agonizomai** was used in secular Greek in reference to fighting with weapons. Jesus alludes to this military meaning in His answer to Pilate's question about what had Jesus done,

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be **fighting**, (agonizomai) that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm. (Jn 18:36)

**Comment:** If Jesus' kingdom were from the world, His followers would have assembled an army and fought to release Him. Note that Jesus did not say that He had no kingdom in this world or that He would never rule on earth. He does have a kingdom in this world, for wherever there are people who have trusted Him and yielded to His sovereignty, He is their King and one day He shall return as "**King of kings and Lord of lords**" (Rev 19:16) to establish a righteous kingdom on earth (Da 7:13-28+). (**See related topic:** Kingdom - basileia)



Note that the agonizomai and agon are the etymological source of English words such as **agony** and **agonize**. Agonize in English means to experience pain so extreme as to cause writhing or contortions of the body, similar to those made in the athletic contests in Greece. To agonize also means to strain, to toil, to suffer extreme pain of body or mind or to suffer violent anguish. These English definitions help give us a picture of what Paul was commanding Timothy and all believers by way of application.

**The good fight** - "The Beautiful fight"! (See below for discussion of kalos, Greek word for "good") This phrase describes our spiritual fight with invisible forces, not a literal fight between men (Are you listening Church?). The Olympic fights on the other hand could hardly be described as good or beautiful but in fact were often quite "ugly", as they left the defeated opponent bruised, battered, and sometimes blind!

**John Calvin** on why it is a "good fight"... "He who hath become a soldier doth not entangle himself with matters inconsistent with his calling." (2 Timothy 2:4.) In like manner, in order to withdraw Timothy from excessive solicitude (anxiety; uneasiness of mind occasioned by fear) about earthly things, he reminds him that he must "fight;" for carelessness and self-indulgence arise from because the greater part (of Christianity) wish to serve Christ in ease, as if it were pastime (an amusement or a mere diversion), whereas Christ calls **all** His servants to **warfare**. For the purpose of encouraging him to fight such a fight courageously, he calls it **good**; that is, successful, and therefore not to be shunned; for, if earthly soldiers do not hesitate to fight, when the result is doubtful, and when there is a risk of being killed, how much more bravely ought we to do battle under the guidance and banner of Christ, when we are certain of victory? (Ps 98:1) Moreover, since a reward awaits us (Rev 22:12), not like what other generals might give to their soldiers, but a glorious immortality and heavenly blessedness (1Cor 15:55, 56, 57); it would certainly be disgraceful that we, who have such a hope held out to us, should grow weary or give way. ([1 Timothy 6 Commentary](#))

**Matthew Poole** writes that it is called a **good fight**..... either in opposition to the bad fights of the men of the world in maintenance of their lusts, or the ludicrous fights usual in their public games, or of the intrinsic nobleness and exercise of it, or the good event or issue of it. ([1 Timothy 6 Commentary](#))

**G W Knight** feels it is a "good fight"...both because it is engaged in for God and the gospel and also because it is inherent to the gospel's making its way in an evil world. ([Knight, George W.: The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text. W. B. Eerdmans: Paternoster Press. 1992](#))

**Illustration of How Serious Athletics were in Greek Culture:** There is a story about a boxer who was disinherited because he no longer resembled his portrait painted earlier in life; he could not prove his identity from the portrait because of his battered features! Are you battered like the boxer? No worries beloved, for you are in Christ and will be approved by God because of your position!

The Greek **Pankration** (means "all powers") lived up to its name as it was a fight with "no holds barred" (save biting and gouging out the opponent's eyes!), including choking, kicking in the stomach, tripping, etc. Training was intense...

The preparation of pankratiasts included a very wide variety of methods, most of which would be immediately recognizable by the trainers of modern high level athletes, including competitors in modern mixed martial arts competitions. These methods included among others the periodization of training; a wealth of regimes for the development of strength, speed-strength, speed, stamina, and endurance; specialized training for the different stages of competition, and methods for learning and engraining techniques. Interestingly, among the multitude of the latter were also training tools that appear to be very similar to Asian martial arts Forms or kata, and were known as cheironomia and anapale. Punching bags ("leather sack") of different sizes and dummies were used for striking practice as well as for the hardening of the body and limbs. Nutrition, massage, and other recovery techniques were used very actively by pankratiasts. ([Pankration](#))

Timothy had surely observed these athletic events and fully understood what Paul meant when he commanded him to "fight the good fight."

**Puritan Thomas Watson** has a treatise on [The Heavenly Race](#) and summarizes several pictures in Scripture to help us grasp the seriousness of this once in lifetime grace race...

True religion is a business of the greatest importance. The soul, which is the more noble and divine part, is concerned in it; and, as we act our part here—so we shall be forever happy—or miserable. The advice of Solomon in this case is most seasonable: "Whatever your hand finds to do—do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom." Ecclesiastes 9:10. The business of true religion, requires our utmost zeal and intensity, Matthew 11:12.

**Sometimes the work we are to do for heaven is set out by striving** Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Strive as in an agony—strive as for a matter of life and death. Though we must be men of peace—yet, in matters of religion, we must be men of strife. It is a holy strife—a blessed contention. Indeed, the

Apostle said, "Let nothing be done through strife"; but, though strife does not do well among Christians—yet it does well in a Christian. He must strive with his own heart—or he will never get to heaven.

**Sometimes our work for heaven is compared to wrestling.** Ephesians 6:12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood—but against principalities and powers." Our life is a continual wrestling. As Jacob wrestled with the angel—so we must wrestle with our corruptions. We must not lay our sins in our bosom—but set our feet upon their necks! If we beat our sins, and get them down—it is not baseness or cowardice to strike them when they are down. And we must wrestle with Satan. Satan labors to get within us and give us a fall, as he did our first parents. What the devil would have done to Christ, throw Him from the pinnacle of the temple, Matthew 4, that he did to our first parents. He threw them down from the pinnacle of happiness. Therefore, we must wrestle with him. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," James 4:7.

**Sometimes the life of a Christian is compared to fighting.** 1 Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith." Christ is the Captain of the saints' forces. He is called the Captain of their salvation, Hebrews 2:10. We must all be military persons. Faith is our shield; hope is our helmet; the Word of God is our sword. We come into the world as into a battle. Lusts war against us, 1 Peter 2:11. Good reason, therefore, that we should war against them. It is a day of battle, and it is dangerous going abroad without our armor.

**Sometimes a Christian's work for heaven is compared to the running of a race;** so in the text, "Don't you know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." In which words the Apostle seems to allude either to the Olympic games, which were kept every fifth year in honor of Jupiter, or to the Ithmian games celebrated near Corinth in the honor of Neptune, in which games they put forth all their strength to win the prize. Just so, said the Apostle, run the race of Christianity which is set before you with a winged swiftness that you may obtain the prize of salvation! ([The Heavenly Race - recommended read](#) - see also Watson's [The Fight of Faith Crowned](#) and Spurgeon's The Greatest Fight in the World)

**Good** (2570) (see more below on [kalos](#)) describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable or that which provides some special or superior benefit.

**Fight** (73) ([agon](#) = root of our English agony, agonize) is the noun form of the verb ([agonizomai](#)) discussed above and speaks of the conflict or contest for victory in the Olympic and Pythian games. It refers to **strife**, **contention**, a competition, a contest, a race, a struggle against opposition. **Agon** is used only five times in Scripture (Phil 1:30; Col 2:1; 1Th 2:2; 1Ti6:12; 2Ti 4:7; Heb 12:1) and is translated conflict, fight, opposition, race, and struggle. In secular Greek **agon** was used to describe any struggle, trial, or danger. **Agon** was also used to describe a gathering or assembly of people and then came to refer to the stadium or actual place where the contest took place. The first-century Roman world was acquainted with these Greek athletic terms, for the Greek stadium was a familiar sight, and the Greek athletic games were well known in the large cities of the Empire.

As an aside note that the related word **agonia** is used in Lk. 22:44+ where we read

And being in **agony** He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

**Agonia** clearly speaks of combat, giving prominence to the pain and labor of the conflict. Agonia is used in secular Greek writings to describe the sense of fearful anticipation that a wrestler experiences before the contest begins. **Agonia** however is clearly not the same "fear" as conveyed by the word **phobos**, but an anxiety about the issue. **Agonia** speaks not of the fear that shrinks back and/or flees from the conflict, but describes a fear which trembles at the prospect of the conflict, an emotion in fact that does not cause one to shrink back but which spurs one on to the uttermost. Indeed, **agonia** is aptly and awesomely depicted in the agony of soul of our dear Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, as sure the battle of eternity was being waged against Him by a desperate devil and his vile minions!

**THOUGHT-** Question: How does Luke 22:44 picture our Lord doing battle even though in agony? What does this teach us about how to war against invisible foes? Let us pray, pray, pray... without ceasing!) So dearly beloved soldier of Christ, whatever warfare you might be currently experiencing, be encouraged that He has already won the battle over all the forces of darkness, a battle that was waged mightily in Gethsemane and was consummated victoriously on the mighty Cross! Fight on! Fight the good fight of faith, knowing not only is the battle the Lord's but His victory is assured! Hallelujah! Amen!

In the present passage Paul used **agon** not to represent the stadium but to vividly picture the intensity of the spiritual struggle in the Christian life into which all believers have been called. When we were transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and of God's beloved Son, we entered into the lifelong struggle with the powers of darkness.

For example, **Paul** used *agon* in a similar sense in his letter to the saints of Thessalonica that

after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the Gospel of God amid much **opposition (agon)** (1Th 2:2+)

In opposition to those who crave material riches, Timothy is to strive after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness

**J C Ryle** on fighting against the flesh - Let us dismiss from our minds the crude modern idea that a believer has only got to sit still, and "yield himself" to God. Let us rather maintain the language of Scripture, and strive to "mortify the deeds of our body," to "crucify our flesh," to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," to wrestle, to fight, and live the soldier's life (Ro 8:13; Gal. 5:24; 2Co. 7:1; Eph. 6:12; 1Ti. 6:12; 2Ti. 2:3). One might think that the account of the armor of God in the Epistle to the Ephesians ought to settle the question of our duty. But the plain truth is, men will persist in confounding two things that differ, that is justification and sanctification. In justification, the word to be addressed to man is, Believe, only believe. In sanctification, the word must be, Watch, pray, and fight. What God has divided, let us not mingle and confuse.

**Matthew Henry** writes that...Those who will get to heaven must fight their way there. **(Ed: Please do not misunderstand -** Matthew Henry is not saying our fighting merits our being taken by God to heaven, as if He owed us that as "wages". To the contrary our fighting against the world, the flesh and the devil is clear evidence that we are now children of light and so we now loathe the darkness, and fight continually against its seeking to defeat us and take us out of the battle! Does that makes sense? Our fighting is evidence we have been saved, not the cause of our salvation!) There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations and... the power of darkness. Observe. It is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good [end and purpose] ([1 Timothy 6 Commentary](#))

**Faith** ([4102](#))(*pistis* is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. In this passage, *pistis* is modified by the definite article in Greek ("*the*") so that it refers to **'the faith'**, the specific faith (see study of this phrase "the faith [*pistis*])")

Approximately **one-half** of the 38 occurrences of the specific phrase **the faith** refer not to the **ACT** of believing but rather to **WHAT** is believed, thus the specific meaning is determined by the **context** (the text that goes with the text in question). In the present case, context favors "the faith" as not the act of believing but what Timothy believed when he made the noble confession.

**MacArthur** agrees that...**Faith** refers to the body of Christian truth, the contents of the Word of God, the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The **faith** is the supreme reality we all can fight for. ([1 Timothy Moody Press](#))

### **A LIFELONG BATTLE: FIRST THE CROSS THEN THE CROWN**

As we ponder Paul's charge to **fight the good fight of faith**, it behooves each of us to remember that while we are promised a **crown**, we must first take up the **Cross** of Christ (Mk 8:34, 35, 36, 37 Mt 10:38, 39, 16:24, 25, 26) and this can mean difficulties, hardships, rejections, hatred by the world, etc. **James Montgomery Boice** speaks to this point in his comments on the book of Nehemiah...

The Christian life is hard work. Even the Bible recognizes it as hard work by describing it as **abattle** ("Fight the good fight of the faith" [1Ti 6:12]), a **race** ("I have finished the race" [2Ti 4:7]), and a **sacrifice** ("I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" [Rom. 12:1]). Bible study is hard. Prayer is hard. Witnessing is hard. Living a holy life in the midst of the temptations of this world is extremely difficult. Because of these difficulties, perhaps we can be excused if, from time to time in our struggles, we tend to regard the Christian life as an example of what Winston Churchill promised England at the start of World War II: a life of "blood, sweat and tears," more than a joy and triumph. The Christian life is a struggle, of course. Jesus promised his followers not a comfortable life but a cross. But it is not only that! After times of struggle, there are often pleasant times of sweet rest. After warfare there is victory. Along with the groans of spiritual exertion, there are times of joyous celebration. (**Boice Expository Commentary - An Expository Commentary – Nehemiah**)

### **WHY THE FIGHT IS A GOOD FIGHT!**



J C Ryle goes in to considerable detail explaining why our **fight** is a **good fight**.

### **True Christianity is a good fight**

"**Good**" is a curious word to apply to any warfare. All worldly war is more or less evil. No doubt it is an absolute necessity in many cases—to procure the liberty of nations, to prevent the weak from being trampled down by the strong—but still it is an evil. It entails a dreadful amount of bloodshed and suffering. It hurries into eternity myriads who are completely unprepared for their change. It calls forth the worst passions of man. It causes enormous waste and destruction of property. It fills peaceful homes with mourning widows and orphans. It spreads far and wide poverty, taxation and national distress. It disarranges all the order of society. It interrupts the work of the Gospel and the growth of Christian missions. In short, war is an immense and incalculable evil, and every praying man should cry night and day, "Give peace in our times." (**Ed**: And I would add the prayer of Ps 122:6) And yet there is one warfare which is emphatically "**good**" and one **fight** in which there is no evil. That warfare is the Christian warfare. That **fight** is the fight of the soul.

**Now what are the reasons why the Christian fight is a "good fight"?** What are the points in which his warfare is superior to the warfare of this world. I want my readers to know that there is abundant encouragement, if they will only begin the battle. The Scripture does not call the Christian fight "**a good fight**" without reason and cause. Let me try to show what I mean.

#### **a. The Christian's fight is good because fought under the best of generals.**

The Leader and Commander of all believers is our divine Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ—a Savior of perfect wisdom, infinite love and almighty power. The Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10KJV-note) never fails to lead His soldiers to victory. He never makes any useless movements, never errs in judgment, never commits any mistake. His eye is on all His followers, from the greatest of them even to the least. The humblest servant in His army is not forgotten. The weakest and most sickly is cared for, remembered and kept unto salvation. The souls whom He has purchased and redeemed with His own blood (Rev 5:9-note) are far too precious to be wasted and thrown away. **Surely this is good!**

#### **b. The Christian's fight is good because fought with the best of helps**

Weak as each believer is in himself, the Holy Spirit dwells in him, and his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 3:16). Chosen by God the Father, washed in the blood of the Son, renewed by the Spirit (1Pe 1:1, 2-note, cp Titus 1:1-note, Titus 3:5-note), he does not go to warfare at his own charges and is never alone (Heb 13:5-note). God the Holy Spirit daily teaches, leads, guides and directs him (Jn 7:37, 38, 39, 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1Jn 2:20, 27, 3:24). God the Father guards him by His almighty power (1Pe 1:4-note). God the Son intercedes for him every moment, like Moses on the mount, while he is fighting in the valley below (Heb 7:25-note, Ro 8:34-note). A threefold cord like this can never be broken! (Ec 4:12) His daily provisions and supplies never fail (Mt 6:11-note). His commissariat is never defective. His bread and his water are sure. Weak as he seems in himself, like a worm, he is strong in the Lord to do great exploits (2Ti 2:1-note). **Surely this is good!**

#### **c. The Christian fight is a good fight because fought with the best of promises.**

To every believer belong exceeding great and precious promises (2Pe 1:4), all "yes" and "amen" in Christ (2Cor 1:20KJV), promises sure to be fulfilled because made by One Who cannot lie (Titus 1:2-note) and Who has power as well as will to keep His word. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Ro 6:14-note) "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Ro 16:20-note) "He which has begun a good work ... will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Php 1:6-note) "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." (Isa 43:2) "My sheep ... shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." (Jn 10:27, 28) "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." (Jn 6:37) "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Heb 13:5-note) "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life ... nor things present, nor things to come ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:38, 39-note). Words like these are worth their weight in gold! Who does not know that promises of coming aid have cheered the defenders of besieged cities, and raised them above their natural strength? Have we never heard that the promise of "help before night" had much to say to the mighty victory of Waterloo? Yet all such promises are as nothing compared to the rich treasure of believers, the eternal promises of God. **Surely this is good!**

#### **d. The Christian's fight is a good fight because fought with the best of issues and results.**

No doubt it is a war in which there are tremendous struggles, agonizing conflicts, wounds, bruises, watchings, fastings and fatigue. But still every believer, without exception, is "more than conqueror through Him Who loved [him]" (Ro 8:37-note). No soldiers of Christ are ever lost, missing or left dead on the battlefield. No mourning will ever need to be put on, and no tears to be shed, for either private or officer in the army of Christ. The muster roll, when the last evening comes, will be found precisely the same that it was in the morning. The English Guards marched out of London to the Crimean campaign a magnificent body of men, but many of the gallant fellows laid their bones in a foreign grave and never saw London again. Far different shall be the arrival of the Christian army in the "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10-note). Not one shall be found lacking. The words of our great Captain shall be found true: "Of those who You gave Me have I lost none" (John 18:9). **Surely this is good!**

**e. The Christian's fight is good because it does good to the soul of him that fights it.**

All other wars have a bad, lowering and demoralizing tendency. They call forth the worst passions of the human mind. They harden the conscience and sap the foundations of religion and morality. The Christian warfare alone tends to call forth the best things that are left in man. It promotes humility and charity, it lessens selfishness and worldliness, it induces men to set their affections on things above. The old, the sick, the dying, are never known to repent of fighting Christ's battles against sin, the world and the devil. Their only regret is that they did not begin to serve Christ long before. The experience of that eminent saint, [Philip Henry](#), does not stand alone. In his last days he said to his family, "*I take you all to record that a life spent in the service of Christ is the happiest life that a man can spend upon earth.*" **Surely this is good!**

**f. The Christian's fight is a good fight because it does good to the world.**

All other wars have a devastating, ravaging and injurious effect. The march of an army through a land is a dreadful scourge to the inhabitants. Wherever it goes it impoverishes, wastes and does harm. Injury to persons, property, feelings and morals invariably accompanies it. Far different are the effects produced by Christian soldiers. Wherever they live, they are a blessing. They raise the standard of religion and morality. They invariably check the progress of drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, profligacy and dishonesty. Even their enemies are obliged to respect them (1Pe 2:12-note, 1Pe 2:15-note). Go where you please, you will rarely find that barracks and garrisons do good to the neighborhood. But go where you please, you will find that the presence of a few true Christians is a blessing. **Surely this is good!**

**g. Finally, the Christian's fight is good because it ends in a glorious reward for all who fight it.**

Who can tell the wages that Christ will pay to all His faithful people? (cp "rest from their labors"! = Rev 14:13-note, Rev 22:12-note) Who can estimate the good things that our divine Captain has laid up for those who confess Him before men? (Mt 6:19, 20, 21-note) A grateful country can give to her successful warriors medals, Victoria crosses, pensions, peerages, honors and titles. But it can give nothing that will last and endure **forever**, nothing that can be carried **beyond the grave**. Palaces like Blenheim and Strathfield say can only be enjoyed for a few years. The bravest generals and soldiers must go down one day before the king of terrors. Better, far better, is the position of him who fights under Christ's banner (Song 2:4), against sin (Ro 7:23, 24, 25-note), the world and the devil. He may get little praise of man while he lives and go down to the grave with little honor; but he will have that which is far better, because far more enduring. He will have "a crown of glory that fades not away" (1Pe 5:4-note, James 1:12-note). **Surely this is good!**

**Let us settle it in our minds that the Christian fight is a good fight—really good, truly good, emphatically good.** We see only part of it yet (1Cor 13:12, 2Cor 5:7-note, cp Ro 8:24, 25-note 2Cor 4:17-note, 2Cor 4:18-note). We see the struggle, but not the end; we see the campaign, but not the reward; we see the cross, but not the crown. We see a few (Lk 12:32, cp Mt 7:13, 14-note) humble, broken-spirited, penitent, praying people, enduring hardships and despised by the world (Jn 15:18, 19, 20, 17:14, 15, 16); but we see not the hand of God over them, the face of God smiling on them, the kingdom of glory prepared for them (Mt 25:34, cp Jn 14:2). **These things are yet to be revealed. Let us not judge by appearances. There are more good things about the Christian warfare than we see. ([Are You Fighting](#))**

**THOUGHT** Dear soldier of the Lord, before you become discouraged by thoughts of times when you have been disobedient, disloyal, downcast, etc, not desiring to be in the battle because you lacked the strength of resolve of heart and spirit, remember that at one time or another we are all in that dark place of the soul. Let the example of Paul encourage you (1Cor 11:1, 4:16), for surely no soldier of Christ has been more war weary than him, and yet he continued to charge into the enemy's camp, but the key to his continued warring for the faith of the Gospel was not in his own energy (cp Jn 15:5) but in that omnipotent, infinite supply continually

provided by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, not just to him but to all weary warriors of all ages (Be encouraged!)

...

And we proclaim Him (Christ in us the hope [absolute assurance] of glory-Col 1:27-note), admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ (mature disciples of Christ, strong soldiers for His Gospel). And for this purpose also I labor (kopiao in the present tense = continually to the point of exhaustion), striving (agonizomai in the present tense = continually - with agonizing effort, but not self effort! Read on for the secret source of Paul's power) according to His power (dunamis = inherent ability to accomplish a task!) , which mightily works (energeo in the present tense = continually energizing!) within me. (Col 1:28-note, Col 1:29-note, cp Zech 4:6, Eph 3:16-note, Gal 5:25-note)

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**Do The Hard Work!** - After living more than 80 years, I know that any claim that offers an effortless way to develop a lean, well-conditioned body is a hoax. So is any sermon title that promises an easy way to become like Christ.

Author Brennan Manning tells of an alcoholic who asked his minister to pray over him to be delivered from his drinking problem. He thought this would be a quick and easy way to overcome his addiction. Recognizing his motive in asking for prayer, the minister replied, "I've got a better idea. Go to Alcoholics Anonymous." He counseled the man to follow the program diligently and read his Bible daily. "In other words," the minister concluded, "do the hard work."

Do the hard work—that's what Paul was saying to Timothy when he told him how he should order his life so he could teach believers how they should live. Notice the action verbs: "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1Timothy 6:11, 12).

Just as there is no easy path to being delivered from alcoholism, so too, there is no effort-free route to Christlikeness. If we really want to become like Jesus, we must keep on doing the hard work. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,  
This is my constant longing and prayer;  
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,  
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear  
—Chisholm

**Conversion is the miracle of a moment;  
becoming like Christ is the work of a lifetime.**

**TAKE HOLD OF THE ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH YOU WERE CALLED: *epilabou* (2SAMM) tes aioniou zoes, eis en eklethes (2SAPI):**

- **Take hold.** Jn 7:52. 1Ti 6:19. Ps 63:8. Pr 3:18. Song 3:4. Php 3:12-14. Heb 3:14, Heb 6:18. 1Jn 2:25. Rev 3:3
- **Eternal.** Mt 18:8. Jn 17:3. Ac 13:46
- [1 Timothy 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SEIZE THE LIFE GOD PROMISES IN CHRIST**

**Take hold of** - "Lay hold of." "Keep your grip on." "Get a good grip on." "Grabbing hold of the life that continues forever." (NCV). "Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you." (NLT) "Hold tightly to the eternal life that God has given you." (TLB). "Secure that life eternal to which you were called." (Moffatt) "Keep your grip on that life eternal to which you have been called." (Phillips) "Take possession of the eternal life into a participation of which you were called." (Wuest)

**Hiebert** has an interesting comment - The verb "**fight**" is in the present tense and indicates the continuity of the struggle in this life, while the verb "**take hold**" is aorist and takes us to the last supreme moment of the contest when the prize is won. (Borrow [First Timothy- Everyman's Bible Commentary](#) - excellent resource)

**Barnes** : As the crown of victory that is held out to you. Seize this as eagerly as the competitors at the Grecian games laid hold on

the prize

**The International Children's Bible** (ICB) paraphrases it this way: "Be sure you receive the life that continues forever." What do you think about that translation? While I generally like the ICB, this paraphrase like all paraphrases illustrates a considerable degree of interpretation. In this case, the conclusion one might deduce from this rendering is that Paul is telling Timothy to "receive" salvation. In context, that is not what Paul is saying as discussed more fully below. Today's English Version (TEV) has a similar problem which might cause confusion with the rendering "win eternal life." The point of this discussion is not to disparage the ICB or the TEV, or other paraphrases, but to make the point that for initial serious study of the Scripture it is best to restrict one's observations to one of the **more literal translations** such as **NAS, ESV, KJV, NKJV, HCSB** (Holman). Be aware that the NIV, although widely used, is considerably less literal than these versions. Of the paraphrased version, I find that Wuest's Expanded Translation is one of the most useful as it tends to bring out the meaning of the Greek tenses and words accurately. It is also good to remember that EVERY translation is to some degree an "interpretation" of the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. The closer one stays to the original language, the better, however the most literal translation (which I always consult when studying a passage), Young's Literal, does not have an easy reading style. While the Amplified Bible has some elements of a paraphrase, it also can be very useful as a "mini-commentary" on Scripture, although I would never recommend it as one's primary study Bible. Also be sure to read the Amplified's introductory notes which explain the important meanings of the phrases in brackets as opposed to parentheses. For a brief discussion of this important topic see Bible Versions compared for how literal they translate Hebrew and Greek

**Wuest** writes that in regard to taking hold of the eternal life "There must be an eager, active, intense determination to live a life pleasing to God. We must not only yield to the Holy Spirit's fullness, trusting Him to produce in us that love that God is, but we must definitely will to be loving and try to be loving.

**THOUGHT** Beloved, this truth calls for all of us to consider an honest heart examination, asking whether this picture describes our life as followers of Christ? If not, why not? What needs to change? What needs to be laid aside, that I might put on the full armor of Christ [Eph 6:11-note, Eph 6:13-note], the armor of light [Ro 13:12-note], yea even the mysterious raiment of Christ Himself [Ro 13:14-note]?)

**Bob Utley** on **take hold** - This is metaphorical of the winning athlete receiving the trophy or crown. This shows mankind's need to initially respond (cf. v. 12b) and continue to respond in faith. The next phrase shows God's keeping power (cf. v. 12c). These are both true and valid covenantal aspects of salvation; they are paradoxical, but true!

**Take hold** (1949)(**epilambano** from **epi** = upon + **lambano** = take hold of) means to lay hold of, get a good grip on, take possession of. All NT uses are in the **middle voice**.

Paul uses the **aorist imperative** which is a command calling for immediate attention. The idea is "just do it." Lay "hold" on eternal life, by "practically appropriating all the benefits, privileges and responsibilities involved in the possession of it." (Vine) Note that by saying **take hold of the eternal life** Paul is in no way implying that eternal life can be lost, as if it might slip out of Timothy's grip (cp Jn 10:27, 28, 29, 1Jn 5:11, 12). Paul uses the reflexive voice (**middle voice**) which signifies that Timothy is to initiate the action of taking hold and that he will partake of the results and benefits thereof. Stated another way the reflexive sense of the middle voice depicts the subject as acting in some way upon himself or concerning himself.

**Wuest** adds this note on Paul's use of the aorist imperative in this passage - The verb is in the aorist imperative, referring to a single act rather than a process. It refers to the habitual act of fighting the good fight, but takes no note of the process, rather emphasizing the result. Grammarians call it the **culminative aorist**, viewing the action from its existing results. Now, when Paul exhorts Timothy to lay hold of eternal life, he does not imply that he does not possess it. Timothy was saved, and possessed eternal life as a gift of God. What Paul was desirous of was that Timothy experience more of what this eternal life is in his life. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Epilambano** was used as a metaphor by those who participated in the Olympic games, and did what they could first to **lay hold of** the prize.

Paul uses **epilambano** again in the next section calling on Timothy to...

*Instruct them* (1Ti 6:17 "those who are rich in this present [contrast future] world") to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1 Ti 6:18-19).

**Comment:** In this context **epilambano** refers to one's initial taking hold of eternal life by believing in the Messiah as one's Redeemer and Lord. Their performance of good works, etc, does not merit their receipt of eternal life but is evidence that they have taken hold of eternal life by believing the Gospel. (cp the intimate coupling of faith and works in Eph 2:8, 9-note and Eph 2:10-note).

## Meanings of Epilambano:

(1) Literally, to lay hold of, take a firm hold, grasp or to seize upon anything with the hands (most of the NT uses have this meaning). Laying hold or grasping someone could be for help (Mt 14:31, Mk 8:23, Lk 14:4). Take hold, seize, lay hold of someone with hostile intent (Acts 16:19; 18:17; 21:30), in the sense of capture (Acts 21:33) Seize or snatch up someone (Luke 23:26); Epilambano is used of taking hold in the figurative sense in Heb 8:9.

(2) Figuratively to take any one in one's speech, i.e. to lay hold of something said by Jesus which can be used against him, Lk. 20:20, 26 = "catch someone in a word"

(3) Figuratively, laying hold of another to rescue him from peril, to help, to succor (but see Vine's interpretative thoughts below in verse list).

(4) Figuratively, To seize upon, lay hold of eternal life, (1Ti 6:12, 19) - as seeking to experience eternal life (already possessed - but Paul is calling for Timothy to fully experience what is his possession and privilege by virtue of having given the good confession of faith in Christ.)

**Epilambano** - 19x in 18v - catch(2), give help(1), gives help(1), seized(2), take hold(2), taking(1), taking hold(1), took(4), took hold(5).

Matthew 14:31 Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and **took hold** of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Mark 8:23 **Taking** the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"

Luke 9:47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, **took** a child and stood him by His side,

Luke 14:4 But they kept silent. And He **took hold** of him and healed him, and sent him away.

Luke 20:20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might **catch** Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

**Robertson explains:** Epilambano is an old verb for seizing hold with the hands and uses as here the genitive case. These spies are for the purpose of (hina) **catching hold of the talk of Jesus if they can get a grip anywhere** This is their direct purpose and the ultimate purpose or result is also stated, "so as to deliver him up"

Luke 20:26 And they were unable to **catch** Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

Luke 23:26 When they led Him away, they **seized** a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas **took hold** of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

Acts 16:19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they **seized** Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

Acts 17:19 And they **took** him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

Acts 18:17 And they all **took hold** of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

Acts 21:30 Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and **taking hold** of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.

Acts 21:33 Then the commander came up and **took** hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done.

Acts 23:19 The commander **took** him by the hand and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"



1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith; **take hold** of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may **take hold** of that which is life indeed.

Hebrews 2:16-note For assuredly He does not **give help** to angels, but He **gives help** to the descendant of Abraham.

**Vine comments:** **Epilambanō** has more than one meaning. Some understand it here as signifying to help. The context is the guide. The connecting word "For" points back to the fact that Christ partook of flesh and blood, and assumed human nature (not that of angels). Again, the succeeding context speaks of His being "made like unto His brethren," and suffering temptations as they suffer. The taking hold therefore describes His becoming incarnate.

**Allen in the New American Commentary has an interesting note:** Context is the key to how the verb should be translated. From the early church until the time of the Reformers, this verb was interpreted to mean that the Son took on humanity via the incarnation. However, in the seventeenth century there was a departure from this interpretation to the more general sense of "coming to the aid of." Since then, many scholars have taken the verb that way. But in the seventeenth century Turretin pointed out that in the more than 40 occurrences of **epilambano** in the Lxx, it never has the metaphorical sense of aid.

Hebrews 8:9-note (epilambano also used in Lxx of Jer 31:32) NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I **TOOK** THEM BY THE **HAND** TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

**Epilambano** - 42 uses in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (Lxx)**-

Gen 25:26; Ex 4:4; Deut 9:17; 25:11; Jdg 12:6; 16:3; 19:25; 2 Sam 13:11; 15:5; 1 Kgs 1:50; 6:6; 11:30; 2 Kgs 2:12; 4:27; Job 8:15; 16:8; 30:18; 38:13; Ps 35:2; 48:7; Pr 4:13; 7:13; Isa 3:6; 4:1; 5:29; 27:4; Jer 31:32; 32:33; 44:23; 49:24; Ezek 29:7; 30:21; 41:6; Dan 13:40; 14:36; Joel 2:9; Zech 8:23; 14:13.

**Here are a few of the uses of epilambano in the Septuagint (Lxx) -**

**Literally** of Jacob taking hold of Esau's heel (Ge 25:26), of Moses told to grasp the snake by its tail (Ex 4:4), Moses taking hold of the Tablets of the 10 Commandments (Dt 9:17). Seizing a concubine (Jdg 19:25) David's son Amnon seizing Tamar (to rape her) (2Sa 13:11) Taking hold of the horns of the altar (1Ki 1:50) Prophet Ahijah takes hold of coat and tears in 12 pieces symbolic of dividing the nation of Israel (1Ki 11:30)

**Figuratively** take hold of instruction (Pr 4:13), of panic seizing men (Ps 48:7)

## **ETERNAL LIFE: OUR FUTURE HOPE OUR PRESENT REALITY**

**The eternal life** - To what does this phrase refer? Is it eternal life in the future of which Timothy is to take hold? Or is eternal life in the "here and now?" Is it a future prize one receives at the end of the "race" (cp 2Ti 4:7, 8) or a present possession during the race? While it is a "future prize" to be sure, in context, Paul is calling on Timothy to get a good grip on the eternal life now. Timothy's salvation and his possession of eternal life are secure, but Paul is saying for him (and us) to live today as if we were living in eternity (we are)! The Bible frequently has positional truth and experiential truth. The former is secure because of our position in Christ. The latter is living in the reality of our position (possessors of eternal life). In other words, many times we live as if we are tethered to this passing world and it is reflected in our attitudes and our actions. In short, our experiential reality of the Christian life falls far short of experiencing what Jesus desires for us "**to have life and have it abundantly**" (John 10:10b). Dear reader, perhaps these notes find you positionally saved, but far from the experience of this abundant, eternal life. Well, remember as we have discussed above, Paul commanded Timothy (and by way of application all believers) to "seize the eternal life", and what God commands, He always enables. Jesus said it this way...

It is the Spirit Who gives **life**; the flesh profits nothing; the **words** that I have spoken to you are spirit and are **life**. (John 6:63)

**Comment:** In view of this truth, what might our responsibility be in regard to taking hold of eternal life? If the words Jesus spoke, and by extension all the Scriptures, are the source of spiritual life, abundant, eternal life, then it behooves us to eat the Word daily and obey the Word faithfully (as enabled by transforming grace and the power of the Spirit). Jesus made it very clear that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4). Even in the Old

Testament, prior to the entrance into the Promised Land, Moses clearly told the people that the **Word** he had spoken to them "is not an idle (empty, vain, useless) **word** for you; indeed **it** (the word) is your life. And by this **word** you shall prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." (Dt 32:47) God has already promised them this great life in a great land. All they had to do was possess what they already "owned" so to speak (cp Joshua 1:3, see the relationship of the word and personal obedience in Nu 14:24). And so in the Old Testament God promised Israel a "land," whereas in the New Testament He promised us a "life". He desires that we experience all of the eternal life that is ours in Christ and we do so by imbibing, ingesting, eating, drinking His Word, which as the old hymn says we then "Trust and Obey."

The apostle John writes that...

And the witness is this, that God has given us **eternal life**, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1Jn 5:11, 12)

**O may my heart be occupied,  
So wholly, Lord, with Thee,  
That with Your beauty satisfied,  
I elsewhere none may see.**

**Teed** agrees that "The eternal life that believers enter is not simply a future hope; it is also a present reality. We take hold of this eternal life when we live as God commands us to live. We will not experience the fullness of God's kingdom until Christ returns and reigns over all the earth. However, eternal life is still accessible during our lifetime, and we experience it when we structure each moment in submission to God's will and commands. This new kind of life is what every believer hears calling them to live, and what God makes possible by sending the Holy Spirit to live within us. ([1 Timothy 6:11-21 Fight the Good Fight](#))

**John MacArthur** comments that "Paul is here admonishing Timothy to "get a grip" on the reality of the matters associated with **eternal life**, so that he would live and minister with a heavenly and eternal perspective (cf. Phil. 3:20-note; Col. 3:2-note) ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word or Logos](#))

**Comment:** Dr. MacArthur as usual makes an excellent point. What we are looking for always influences what we are living for and how we are living. If we are eagerly longing and "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13-note), this mindset will enable us, as we are instructed by grace (Titus 2:11-12a-note), to "deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:12b-note). I fear that many believers have lost that sense of wonder and awe and eager anticipation for the **Second Coming** because they are staring far too intently at the fleeting treasures and trinkets of this world which is passing away! (1Jn 2:17) When we are living godly in the present, looking for Christ's **imminent** return, we will find ourselves redeeming the time and taking hold of the eternal life to which we were called. **Are you living for this world or next? What (Who) are you looking for?**

**Eternal** (166)(*aionios*) describes this **life** as a **life** without end! **True life forever and ever, amen!** That is the "quantity" (quantification) of this **life**. See definition of **zoe** for the "quality" of this **life**!

**Life** (2222)(*zoe*) describes the very essence of life God intended for His creatures and His creation. Supernatural life. Fullness of life which alone belongs to God the Giver of life and is alone available to His children in the "now" of eternity (Ro 6:4-note, Ep 4:18-note) as well as in eternity future (See Mk 10:30 and note [scroll down] "Eternal life" as described in Titus 1:2). As **Wuest** so beautifully explains the divine *zoe* given to Timothy and to all of God's children (Jn 1:12, 13, 1Jn 3:1-note, 1Jn 3:2-note)...

**Zoe** speaks of **life** in the sense of one who is possessed of vitality and animation.

It is used of the absolute fulness of life,  
both essential and ethical,  
which belongs to God.

It is used to designate the life which God gives to the believing sinner, a vital, animating, spiritual, ethical dynamic which transforms his inner being **and as a result**, his behavior.

(In comments on 1John 1:2-note **Wuest** adds that the) life that God is, is not to be defined as merely animation, but as definitely ethical in its content. God is not the mere reason for the universe, as the Greeks thought, but a Person with the characteristics and qualities of a divine Person.

**The ethical and spiritual qualities of this life which God is, are communicated to the sinner when the**

**latter places his faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and this becomes the new, animating, energizing, motivating principle which transforms the experience of that individual, and the saint thus lives a Christian life.**

The message of (the epistle of) John is that since the believer is a partaker of this life, it is an absolute necessity that he show the ethical and spiritual qualities that are part of the essential nature of God, in his own life. If these are entirely absent, John says, that person is devoid of the life of God, and is unsaved. The ethical and spiritual qualities of this life were exhibited to the human race in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. His life thus becomes the pattern of what our lives should be in holiness, self-sacrifice, humility and love. (Word Studies)

**Were called** ([2564](#)) (**kaleo** from root **kal-**, whence English "call") literally means to speak to another in order to attract their attention or to them bring nearer, either physically or in a personal relationship. **Kaleo** is a major verb in the NT and its specific meaning depends on the **context** in which it is used. In this verse **kaleo** clearly refers to a **call in the sense of to choose** so that one might receive some special benefit or experience. In this passage, **kaleo** is Paul's technical term for God's summoning men to salvation and describes God "calling" people into a relationship with Himself, initiating their conversion experience (Is this grand truth mysterious? Absolutely! But it is absolutely true!). And so in this passage, **called** refers to God's effectual, sovereign call of Timothy to participation in salvation. In his second letter Paul declared that God...

has saved us, and **called** us with a holy **calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity (before the world began!), (2Ti 1:9-note).

**Comment:** In light of Timothy's call by God to salvation and eternal glory even before the world began, Timothy was to "preach in the light of the reality that what is **eternal** is all that matters." (MacArthur)

Divine calling, like divine election and predestination, is not a popular teaching, but one which appears to be clearly taught in Scripture. As this term is used by Paul (and Jude and John) "**the called**" are those who have **heard** the good news and **responded** to it by exercising saving faith. In this understanding "**the called**" are virtually synonymous with "**the elect**". If you "wrestle" with this doctrine (and that is not a sin in my opinion, for this is a difficult doctrine for finite man to comprehend), instead of reading what others have to say about "calling" (including the notes that follow which expand somewhat on this topic), you might want to read what God has to say about the subject. Here are a few representative passages to study. Ask the Spirit to lead you into all truth for His Name's sake. - Ro 8:28-note, Ro 8:29-note, Ro 9:11, 1Co 1:9, Gal 1:6, 15, 1Th 2:12, 2Ti 1:9-note, Hebrews 9:15, 1Peter 1:15-note, 1Peter 2:9-note, 2Pe 1:3.)

**Vincent** writes that "Calling, in the writings of the apostles, is habitually represented as God's work." (See [What is the effectual calling/call?](#))

**MacArthur** has good word -The man of God, aware of God's effectual call to eternal salvation and his own public profession of faith in response to that call, maintains an eternal perspective. He does not engage in the petty, meaningless battles of this world, but focuses on the eternal things. He lives above the mundane and trivial matters of the passing world. He is consumed with what will never pass away—God's Word and the souls of men. (See [1 Timothy Commentary](#))

**Calvin** on our calling...Because men would run at random (Ed: Compare Ge 3:9 - where Adam has just sinned and is hiding in shame trying vainly to cover his sin with "fig leaves", while God is calling "Adam, where are you?"! Fallen mankind runs from God, not to God!), and to no purpose, if they had not God as the Director of their course, for the purpose of promoting their cheerful activity, (Paul) mentions also the **calling**; for there is nothing that ought to animate us with greater courage than to learn that we have been "**called**" by God; for we conclude from this, that our labor, which God directs, and in which He stretches out His hand to us, will not be fruitless. Besides, to have rejected the calling of God would be a disgraceful reproach; and, therefore, this ought to be a very powerful excitement: "*God calls thee to eternal life; beware of being drawn aside to anything else, or of falling short in any way, before thou hast attained it.*" (Ed: Notice that in Calvin's last statement we see the juxtaposition of divine calling and human response/responsibility. Oh, the deep, deep mystery of it all, should make all of God's children bow low in humble adoration and praise to the one Who is Holy, Holy, Holy.)

**The called** are those who have been summoned by God... **called**...

- by grace (**Kaleo** - Gal 1:6)
- through the "gospel" that we "may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Kaleo** - 2Th 2:14)
- to salvation (**Kaleo** - Ro 8:30-note)
- saints by calling (**Kletos** - 1Co 1:2)
- brought "into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (**Kaleo** - 1Co 1:9)
- both Jews and Greeks (**Kletos** - 1Co 1:24)

- not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles (**Kaleo** - Ro 9:24-note)
- according to His purpose (**Kletos** - Ro 8:28-note)
- to walk worthy (**Kaleo** - Ep 4:1- note)
- (to proclaim His excellencies) out of darkness into His marvelous light (**Kaleo** - 1Pe 2:9-note)
- for this purpose (to suffer... follow in His steps) - (**Kaleo** - 1Pe 2:21-note)
- heavenly calling (**klesis**) (Heb 3:1-note)
- (a holy calling) having been called (**kaleo**) "with a holy" calling (**klesis**) (2Ti 1:9-note)
- to be holy yourselves in all your behavior - (**Kaleo** - 1Pe 1:15-note)
- to inherit a blessing (following Christ's example) - (**Kaleo** - 1Pe 3:9-note)
- to His eternal glory in Christ (**Kaleo** - 1Pe 5:10-note)
- and return in triumph "with Him" at the end of this age (**Kletos** - Re 17:14-note).

These magnificent Biblical truths on "calling" should cause all the "called of Jesus Christ" to cry out "Glory!", and not to argue with Him, but to adore Him all the more. May our Father grant each of us the inner strengthening by His Spirit that we might be enabled to supernaturally "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which (we) have been called" (Eph 4:1- note) in Christ! Amen

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## The Battle Still Rages

Fight the good fight of faith. — 1 Timothy 6:12

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18

The world has changed drastically since my dad stood his ground against the enemy in World War II. Back then, he and his brave comrades fought against nations that were threatening to destroy any country that dared stand in their way. Dad took a bullet in the leg and suffered the painful effects of that injury for the rest of his life.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who fought in that war. Their bravery issued from a cause they believed in—a mission they were willing to die for. They understood that if they did not go overseas, many people would lose their freedom, or even their lives, under the rule of ruthless dictators. Thankfully, the battles of those years are behind us.

A different kind of battle still rages today—a battle that we as Christ's followers must fight every day (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemy, the devil, continues to try to bring down our faith, take over our hearts, and stop the spread of the gospel. He is called "the wicked one" (6:16), and he will always be our enemy.

Are we willing to suffer for the cause? Are we brave enough to be a faithful generation of believers? Let's fight the good fight!  
By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before!  
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle see His banner go!  
—Baring-Gould

Christ's soldiers fight best on their knees.

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**What Are We Holding On To?** - Tolkien's classic The Lord of the Rings trilogy came to life in recent years on film. In the second epic story, the hero, Frodo, reached a point of despair and wearily confided to his friend, "I can't do this, Sam." As a good friend, Sam gave a rousing speech: "It's like in the great stories ... Full of darkness and danger they were... Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going. Because they were holding on to something." Which prompted Frodo to ask: "What are we holding on to, Sam?"

It's a significant question, one that we all need to ask ourselves. Living in a fallen, broken world, it's no wonder that sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the powers of darkness. When we are at the point of despair, ready to throw in the towel, we do well to follow Paul's advice to Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12).

In life's battles, let's hold on to the fact that good will triumph over evil in the end, that one day we will see our Master and Leader face-to-face, and we will reign with Him forever. You can be part of this great story, knowing that if you have trusted Jesus for salvation you are guaranteed a victorious ending!

Though weak and helpless in life's fray,

God's mighty power shall be my stay;  
Without, within, He gives to me  
The strength to gain the victory.  
—D. De Haan

**The trials of earth are small compared  
with the triumphs of heaven.**

**AND YOU HAVE MADE THE GOOD CONFESSION IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES: kai homologesas (2SAAI) ten kalen homologian enopion pollon marturon:**

- **And you:** Ro 8:28-30, 9:23, 24. Col 3:15. 1Th 2:12. 2Th 2:14. 2Ti 1:9. 1Pe 3:9 5:10
- **Have made** 1Ti 6:13. Dt 26:3, 17-19. Isa 44:5. Lk 12:8, 9. Ro 10:9, 10. 2Co 9:13. Heb 10:23. 2Pe 1:10, 11
- **Good.** Dt 32:42
- [1 Timothy 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **HAVE YOU MADE THE GOOD CONFESSION?**

**You have made the good confession** - Literally this reads "to **confess** (homologeo) the good or beautiful **confession** (homologia)." **KJV** says "hast professed a good profession". **Mace** says "you made that excellent profession of faith before so many witnesses."

**What confession?** Acknowledging Jesus is the Messiah (see more discussion below), affirming one's loyalty and allegiance to Him..

**Have made (confess)** ([3670](#)) (homologeo from **homos** = one and the same or together with+ **lego** = to say; confess from **con** = together, **fateor** = to say.) literally means to say the same thing as another and so to agree in one's statements with, to acknowledge, to admit the truth of (an accusation).

The **aoist tense, indicative mood** signifies that this confession was a past, historical event in Timothy's life. **Where and when?** Before many witnesses. While one cannot be dogmatic, this confession could have been when Timothy was baptized, when he was "ordained" as a pastor (most authorities believe Timothy was pastor of the "first church of Ephesus.") It could also have been when he proclaimed the Word to the believers in Ephesus. One writer says that this good confession in a sense might also include his whole subsequent testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Expositor's Greek Testament** feels this confession was at Timothy's baptism writing that "In the primitive Church the baptism of an individual was a matter in which the Church generally took an interest and part. The rule laid down in The Didache, 7, shows this: "Before the baptism let him that baptizeth and him that is baptized fast, and any others also who are able". ([1 Timothy 6 Commentary](#))

Paul is clearly using **homologeo** in the present context with the sense of acknowledging or professing publicly, specifically of making a statement of what Timothy believed and to Whom he gave his allegiance (homologeo can reflect a public acknowledgment of one's allegiance). We see homologeo used in the sense of confessing that one believes in Christ in Romans where Paul states...

that if you **confess** (homologeo) with your mouth Jesus as Lord (**Something Timothy had done in the past**), and believe in your heart (Notice that what comes out of the mouth is a reflection of what is in one's heart, cp Mt 12:34) that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved (**Receive eternal life**), for (**term of explanation**) with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

**Calvin** on why Paul would mention his **good confession** now "And hast confessed a good confession. By mentioning his former life, the Apostle excites him still more to persevere; for to give way, after having begun well, is more disgraceful than never to have begun. To Timothy, who had hitherto acted valiantly, and had obtained applause, he addresses this powerful argument, that the latter end should correspond to the beginning. By the word confession I understand not that which is expressed in words, but rather what is actually performed; and that not in a single instance merely, but throughout his whole ministry. The meaning therefore is: "Thou hast many witnesses of thy illustrious confession, both at Ephesus and in other countries, who have beheld thee acting faithfully and sincerely in the profession of the gospel; and, therefore, having given such a proof of fidelity, thou canst not, without the greatest shame and disgrace, shew thyself to be anything else than a distinguished soldier of Christ." By this passage we are taught



in general, that the more any of us excels, the less excusable is he if he fail, and the stronger are his obligations to God to persevere in the right course. ([1 Timothy 6 Commentary](#))

**Good** (2570) [kalos](#) describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. **Kalos** is good with emphasis (as discussed below) on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. In **classical Greek kalos** was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of **kalos** referred to the usefulness of something such as a **fair** haven, a **fair** wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices. **Kalos** referred to that which was "morally beautiful" or noble and hence virtue was called "the good" (to kalon).

**Confession** (3671) (**homologia** from **homoú** = together with + **légo** = say) means literally the statement of the same thing and thus expresses agreement with another. It represents the open expression of one's allegiance to a proposition or a person. Such a confession is the effect of deep conviction regarding the facts (Truth). True faith should not be hidden.

**THOUGHT:** Have you been baptized? If not this is a wonderful time to give the good confession in the presence of many witnesses! Are you making a good confession by living the supernatural life in such a way before the watching world which is lost and dead in their trespasses and sins?

You are writing a Gospel,  
A chapter each day,  
By the deeds that you do  
And the words that you say.  
Men read what you write,  
Whether faithful or true:

Just what is the Gospel  
According to you?  
-- Author unknown

**John MacArthur** sums up 1Timothy 6:12 writing that "The man of God, aware of God's effectual call to eternal salvation and his own public profession of faith in response to that call, maintains an eternal perspective. He does not engage in the petty, meaningless battles of this world, but focuses on the eternal things. He lives above the mundane and trivial matters of the passing world. He is consumed with what will never pass away—God's Word and the souls of men.

**Witnesses** (3144) ([martus/martys](#)) in this context describes the witness as an observer of the historical event (Timothy's confession).

**J C Philpot's** devotional...

#### **"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." 1 Timothy 6:12**

It is through faith that the power whereby God keeps his people, acts and is made known, and it is very instructive and encouraging to be able to trace in our own hearts the connection between the power of God and the actings of faith. We are not carried to heaven as passengers are carried by the express train, so that if once in the carriage they may go to sleep, look out of the window, or read the newspaper without fear of losing their way, or not reaching their destination. Though kept by the power of God, we have to fight every step of the way.

It is this living, fighting, struggling, and yet eventually conquering faith, which sets the tried and exercised child of God at such a distance from the loose and careless doctrinal professor, who is hardened and emboldened to presume, and even walk in ways of sin and death by holding the doctrine of being kept by the power of God, without knowing anything of the secret way by which this power works and keeps. To such we may adapt the language of James. You believe that the elect of God are kept by his Almighty power unto salvation. "You do well; the devils also believe and tremble"--which you do not if you be one of these loose professors. But does God keep you? Does he keep you from evil, that it may not grieve you? Does he keep your eye single, your conscience tender, your heart prayerful, your life and walk circumspect, your eye from adultery, your tongue from folly, your hands from covetousness, and your feet from the ways of pride and worldliness? You have no evidence that you are an heir of God and are being kept by his power unto salvation, unless you have some experience how he keeps, and that as it is by power on his part, so it is through faith on yours. Whenever we slip, stumble, or go astray, it is through the power of unbelief; and whenever we stand, fight, or prevail, it is by faith.

#### **"Lay hold on eternal life." 1 Timothy 6:12**

The main office of the hand is to take hold of and grasp an object. The human hand is a masterpiece of anatomy, the fingers and the strong matching thumb being expressly constructed by their Divine Craftsman to seize and retain objects; and therefore every muscle, artery, vein, and nerve conspire together to fulfill this destined office. Is there not in the office of faith something analogous to and corresponding with this? What says the Lord? "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." There is a taking hold, then, of God's strength. Is not this by faith? Is there any other grace of the Spirit which takes hold of the Lord, as Jacob took hold of the wrestling angel, or as sinking Peter laid hold of the hand of Jesus? "Lay hold on eternal life," is Paul's charge to Timothy. But how is eternal life, and especially Jesus, "the Life," laid hold of, except by faith? "He that believes on me," says Jesus, "has everlasting life." He has it by laying hold of it.

So we read also of "fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18). As the manslayer fled for refuge to the appointed city, and when his hand grasped the gates was safe, so guilty sinners flee for refuge to the Lord Jesus, and by faith lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel of the grace of God.