

Do Christianity

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[0 : 0 0] Amen, and you can be seated and you'll open your Bibles if you would this morning to 1 Timothy chapter 6. 1 Timothy chapter 6, we'll dismiss our children to children's ministry.

I'm about half here this morning. I'm going through a bit of an illness and had a fever for a couple days. So I'm just going to do my best, certainly feel energized as much as I've felt in the past few days to preach this glorious text.

And before we get there, I want to do mention a few things for you. This next weekend is obviously James White coming to town, and I want to thank those of you that volunteered to help with the pizza.

And I will be in touch with you the next couple days to just work out the details there. Otherwise, I hope that you plan to make it December 8th, Friday, for carols and cookies, pizza, Q&A;, and then December 10th as well.

And also, I just want to make sure that I take time to thank all the many people who worked yesterday and doing all the work for the continued glow-up of the building. Just thank you so much for all the work you've done.

[1 : 1 0] Scott, thank you for what you've done in the basement and in the chapel. And Jillian's not here, but I want to thank her for the decorations. And thank you just to all of you who worked so hard yesterday.

And honestly, it's just amazing to look at where the building is now compared to where it was. And so we're very grateful for God's provision through his people. To the text, we're looking at, this is the last sermon in 1 Timothy, and it's in 1 Timothy 6.

And we're looking at verses 11 through 16 today with a main focus on verses 11 through 13. Let me read the text to you this morning, and we'll get into it. As for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 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.

I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which he will display at the proper time which he will display at the proper time.

[2 : 3 5] He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. Well, the first thing I think we ought to notice this morning as we look at this text is just all of the action taking place in the first few verses.

We have a lot of verbs. We have an excess of verbs in this passage. We've got this series of commands beginning in verse 11 through verse 12 where we see these commands from Paul to Timothy.

flee these things, pursue righteousness, fight the good fight, take hold. These verbs, I think one of the things that stood out to me as I examined this text back when I could think straight, is these are verbs that are, by the way, all this was prepared when I was in my right mind.

It's just a question of delivery at this point. Stay on script, we'll be fine. I won't accidentally start a cult. One of the things that kind of struck me was just that these are verbs that all people do.

[4 : 0 3] These are things that human beings just are about. Think about it this way. Whether you're a Christian or not, there will be things that you flee, you intentionally avoid, that you go out of your way to not be involved in.

There will be things you will pursue, there will be things you fight for, and there will be things that you really try to take hold of.

It's interesting that these verbs are really just kind of the way we live our lives. We're fleeing certain things, we're fighting for certain things, we're pursuing certain things, we're taking hold of certain things.

What's really different between the Christian life and the non-Christian life is the nouns. The verbs are common to all people. The nouns are not common to all people.

One of the things, let me see if I can make it clear as to what I'm getting at. What would happen if you were in a fight with your spouse and you stopped and said, okay, we're doing the verb, but are we fighting a good fight right now?

[5 : 14] Is this the good fight? It's like, no, this isn't the good fight. There's a good fight. That's the good fight of faith. Do you realize what would happen in the world if everybody just fought the good fight of faith?

Do you realize how little fighting there would be in the world if everybody was fighting the right fight? Think about the things that you've tried to avoid that you're kind of maybe afraid of, whether it be sickness, which, trust me, it's not great, poverty, humiliation, loneliness.

You've gone out of your way to flee these things. It's like, well, that's good, but, you know, the Bible has a list of things that are even worse than that. And what if we just, I think these are things that we're going to do in our life.

We're going to fight. We're going to flee. We're going to pursue. Let's make sure we're fleeing and fighting and pursuing and taking hold of the right things. The next thing I see from this text, and we're still talking about this idea of all these action words, is just that Christianity is, and this is important to remember, and it's not easy to keep in mind at all times, Christianity is a thing we do. Christianity is a thing we do. This is my second point. I was reminded this week of Jonathan Edwards' resolutions, many of which he wrote when he was 19 years of age, and his first resolution in particular came to mind as I was thinking about Christianity being a thing we do.

[6 : 45] This is what Edwards wrote. Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory in my own profit, I'm sorry, in my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole of my duration, resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.

Resolved to do this whatever difficulties I meet with, how many and how great soever. Now if you were to go, oh, it's right up here on the screen, you can look at this phrase, resolved to do.

Resolved to do. This is important. Christianity is not something you simply believe. Christianity is a thing you do.

I was thinking about the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11. And even though it says in that passage that all of these heroes of the faith, you know, they desired a better country, we shouldn't take that to mean that they are somehow not involved in the world.

what we find is a list full of doers. Hebrews 11 is actually kind of a really great example of faith and works being inseparable.

[8 : 13] Because they're commended for their faith in Hebrews 11. But then when you start looking at who we're talking about, we see a bunch of people who are doing things. Here we have the heroes of the faith.

Look at all they've done. It's also surprising how many of them were, like, for instance, wealthy or, like, were involved in politics to some degree or another.

Here are these people who are being credited for their faith, but their faith is super action-oriented. Listen to Hebrews 11.33.

They conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to fight.

This is a Christianity that acts in the world and on the world. And it's this Christianity, the kind of Christianity that acts on the world, that gets opposed by the world.

[9 : 23] The world doesn't care if you have some beliefs that are different from theirs. Where this really comes to matter is whether you try to do something with those beliefs that would influence or make it difficult for them to do what they want to with their beliefs.

So what we see in this passage in 1 Timothy 6 is just like, this is an active Christianity. It's full of action words. And the world's not going to like that.

The world's not going to like a Christianity that is more than just what are the, you know, bookmarks and refrigerator magnets and platitudes.

They're okay with that stuff. You realize that. What they don't want is for you to start acting in the world like a Christian. This is really what Paul's getting at when he says in 2 Timothy, all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted.

Not all who have godly ideas, not all who have good doctrine, all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted.

[10:33] And all this just reminded me of something Chesterton once said. He's like, it's not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting. It's that Christianity has been found difficult and not tried.

And so, this is just all, you just have to realize that throughout the scriptures this concern rings large. Namely, it's just so easy to fall into a idea-only faith.

faith. A faith without works. A faith that is full of notions, theological notions, but a faith without works. What we see Paul saying to Timothy is, is no, no, no, you're called to do stuff.

You're called to flee and to fight and pursue and take hold. Well, the third point is, is that right alongside these calls to action who have many, many theological truths in this passage.

In addition to all these action words, we have all of this doctrine jam-packed into this passage. I essentially think that what Paul's doing here is he's lining up promises to support the productivity that he's calling Timothy to do.

[11:50] I'm going to talk more about that in a moment. Look back at the passage again, beginning in verse 11. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold. These are all of our actions. 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.

Verse 13. I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things. And of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ which he will display at the proper time.

He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, who no one has ever seen or can see.

To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. So you've got a lot of doctrine supplying for these commands.

[13:03] The first one I see here, the first promise really I think you see is in reference to the eternal life to which he was called. The eternal life to which he was called.

See that? Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called. This is a really wonderful way of talking about one of the most important promises for the Christian and that is the promise of eternal security.

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called. Jesus at one time as a means of bringing comfort to them says, I want to make sure we all understand.

you did not choose me. I have chosen you. There's another beautiful place in John chapter 10 verse 28 where Jesus says, I will give you, I give them eternal life and they will not perish and no one will be able to snatch them out of my hand.

This is a fundamental for a joyful Christianity. To understand that long before I called on the name of the Lord, the Lord called upon me.

[14:21] To long before I chose him, he chose me. That he has had his choosing eye on me quite apart from anything I can do to earn it and that that choosing eye is not going to change.

And what's so beautiful, I think, about this particular verse, this idea of take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, is he's essentially saying, take hold of that which has taken hold of you.

And friends, I know as a pastor that everybody, just about everybody, goes through times of struggling and wondering or not whether they're really saved and whether they're really secure in Christ and so on and so forth.

I can just tell you this, for whatever reason, God has built us in a certain way where our grip on God feels more real to us than his grip on us.

And, of course, it's exactly the opposite and, of course, heaven forbid, your whole eternal destiny is dependent on your grip strength because some of y'all, come on.

[15 : 29] But there's something about us and the way we were built where it's not just enough in terms of comfort and assurance. It's not enough for you to know that God has his grip on you.

Paul's telling Timothy to do the thing I would tell you if you're doubting. Go ahead and grab the thing that's grabbing you. Take hold of that which has taken hold of you and you will, again, I can't explain why, something changes when you're holding hands with God and he's not just holding your wrist, right?

Remember when you were a little kid, sometimes you're uncooperative and your dad or your mom would just hold your wrist and take you wherever. Well, sometimes that's the Christian life, but if you want to feel confident in him, there's something about taking hold of that which has taken hold of you.

Another beautiful promise we see, and I won't elaborate on this very much, but, you know, Paul tells Timothy that, you know, take hold of this eternal life about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

I think we need to understand that our past faithfulness to God, our past spiritual triumphs, our past mountaintops are promises to us from God.

[16 : 56] You can look back and say, there were times when I really was confident in him. There were times when he really did speak to me. There were times when I made the good confession in front of many witnesses.

This is probably a reference to his baptism and to his testimony of Christ at his baptism. But there's another sense in which, like, just even remembering how he has cared for you and how you have loved him in the past can be a kind of promise.

And then, really, from verses 13 through 16, we just have so much regarding the nature of God.

That's what I'm going to end this on, is talking about the nature of God.

Before we get there, I want to point something out to you, and that is that Paul is, I think, supplying a great number of promises to Timothy because he's called Timothy to do hard things.

things. And, you know, some of you are choosing to do hard things. You're doing difficult things. You're choosing that. You're raising a bunch of kids.

[18 : 04] You're starting a school. You're choosing to do difficult things. Some of you are doing difficult things that you did not choose to do. They were chosen for you. This is, in some sense, marvelous, either way, because we do Christianity.

We don't just believe things. We do Christianity. Christianity is a thing we do. So that's great. But what I want to suggest from this passage is that Paul is giving him all these promises because the more productive you are, the more productive you'd like to be, the more promises you need.

You know, I've done hard things before, and they don't always go so well. I'm not talking about success. I'm talking about the state of my soul afterwards.

Lord. And I can tell you that when I've ended a difficult thing not so close to the Lord, it's because I just greatly underestimated the amount of spiritual calories I needed to take in while I was doing this, going through this harder season.

And of course, when you're going through a harder season, it makes all the sense in the world. You're busier, life's more complicated, and so you're kind of, you're not thinking about eating.

[19 : 25] But if you really thought about this passage, it's like Paul's giving Timothy, here's four things to do, and here's 4,000 Bible promises to go with it. It's really this highly dense theological storing, storehouse, that goes along with the call to excellence.

it's a shame, and it's true of me as everyone else, it's a shame that we are so often either devotionalists or doers.

Wouldn't it be great if one of us were both of those things? Very few of us are. It'd be great if we could do Mary Martha hybrids, right?

But that's what we need, and that's what Paul's giving Timothy. He's like, I want you to be productive. I want you to accomplish things. I want you to fight the good fight. And to do that, you need to consume a lot of nourishment in the Lord.

Now, I'll just talk, intentionally cut this down just for my own sake, but I just want to talk about verse 13 as one of the glimpses that we get of God, that Paul's providing Timothy, that the truth is that we don't want a doctrine only Christianity and we don't want a doing only Christianity, but we see in this text a relationship that's like this, all of your doing has to be fueled by doctrine, end of story.

[20 : 57] All of your productivity has to be fueled by the promises of God. That's just the only way it works. And I just want to leave you with one insight into one particular promise that we see in verse 13.

Paul writes, I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.

Well, we're going to look into it a little bit more, but it's very easy to understand what the God who gives life to all things means.

But what does Paul mean when he talks about Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession? What does that mean?

Well, that is essentially the moment when Jesus could have gotten out of it all. This is where he's been arrested.

[22 : 08] He's standing before Pilate. Pilate is inclined to let him go. And essentially Jesus forces the crucifying hand by agreeing to Pilate's assertion that he is indeed the king of the Jews.

So what we have here is the God who gives life to all things and the God who chose to die so that he could give eternal life.

That's what Paul's saying here. It's a beautiful thing. It's a momentous thing. the creator of the universe had a moment where he willingly surrendered his life by saying the one thing he had to say to be crucified.

So what does this tell us? What's the glory there? What kind of calories can we get out of these ideas? Well, one thing we can see is we can see something about the personality of God in this comparison.

So what I'm going to do here just for the rest of the time is I'm going to hold these two ideas in tension. And I would call it this way, the God of creation and the God of the cross. We'll think of it that way.

[23 : 38] Hold these two things together and think about God a little bit. Personality of God. You know, a significant, well, I think probably almost every false gospel either makes God to be completely prosperous or completely austere.

Does that make sense? Like a God who's either super into earthly riches or a God who's not into earthly things at all. That's the Gnostic God. So you've got hedonism over here and kind of Gnosticism over here.

Kind of all the errors drive us in those directions. But what we've got when we see that this is the God who gives life to all things is that we've got a jolly God.

The word jolly needs more use. You know, the big guys of the world would feel better if that word got used more often. The idea that God gives life to all things communicates the generosity and the warm-hearted prosperity of God.

In Acts 14-15 Paul says to a group of men who are tempted to worship him and Barnabas if memory serves. He says, now I want you to listen to this because this is a basic theology that lies behind God giving life to all things.

[25 : 05] What does that mean? Why does that tell us? What does that tell us? And I'm arguing it tells us something about the personality of God that he is warm-hearted and a giver. Men, why are you doing these things?

We also are men of like nature with you and we bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways, yet he did not leave himself without a witness. For he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

It's the God that gives life to all things. He's a God who satisfies your hearts with food and gladness. I mean, we see this in 1 Timothy in multiple places, one after our text in verse 17.

Paul says, God richly provides us with everything to enjoy. And in 1 Timothy 4, we looked at this passage a few weeks ago. We're told, God created everything to be received with thanksgiving by

those who believe and know the truth.

[26 : 28] For everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. What are we seeing about the personality of God?

We see a generous God whose default, now I think this is important, whose default is prosperity. God's default is abundance.

God's default is generosity. The aim of God's character is lavishness. about this verse in 1 Timothy 4, Joe Rigney writes, and if you haven't read this book, I highly recommend it.

The book is called *The Things of Earth, Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts*. He writes, here we see the divine endorsement of sensible pleasures, that is, things that we enjoy through our bodily senses, things we see, the brilliant purples, reds, and oranges of a sunset, the diamond blanket of stars arrayed every night, the panoramic glory of a fertile valley seen from the top of a mountain, the majesty of a well cultivated garden in early summer, things we hear, the steady crashing of waves on a shoreline, the songs of birds in early spring after a long silence of winter, the soul stirring harmony of strings and woodwinds and brass and percussion, the innocent refreshment of the laughter of children, things we smell, the fragrance of roses, the aroma of pine, the delightful odor of cedar, the scene of a home cooked meal, things we taste, the warm sweetness of chocolate chip cookies and the puckering sour of a glass of lemonade and the heavenly savoriness of a plate piled high with bacon, the surprising yet delightful bitterness of herbs, the piercing saltiness of well seasoned meat, and things we touch, the cool smoothness of cotton bedsheets, the warm comfort of a wool blanket, the reassuring strength of a hug from a friend, the soft tenderness of a kiss from your spouse.

You need to understand that there's a person who thought all that up, and that's your God. He invented that stuff.

[28 : 48] It didn't exist, and he made it. God invented chocolate and hugs. So what we've got in this idea of the God who gives life to all things is a glimpse into his personality, and I think you could say, here is the God of Eden, you know.

It's the first God we see, the first thing God says. He sounds like a Jewish grandmother. Eat, eat. It's like, there's food, eat this food. And then we transition with Paul's language from the God who gives life to all things to the God who made the good confession before Pontius Pilate to die.

And so now we shift from the God of Eden, the God of the Garden of Eden, to the God of the Garden of Gethsemane. Right? And so now we move from prosperity to austerity.

We move from bounty and wine to the bitter cup. And this is who God is. This is the God you serve. Now, the thing to understand is that he went to Gethsemane to bring you to eternal joy. So what we've got here with this great God we serve is a God who's bent on lavishing you for all of eternity with lots of things we probably don't know about yet.

[30 : 20] There's probably something better than chocolate out there. You know? He has got this plan to bless you and that plan sometimes goes through things we call crosses.

That's the God we have. God is the totality of his character is toward blessing. But he uses bitterness to get us there sometimes.

And he has used that to most effect in surrendering his own son to death on a cross. That's the personality of God.

God. And just knowing God that way makes life very productive potentially. You've still got to do the stuff.

But you could see how the productivity could come if on the one hand you are optimistic and you believe in a glad-hearted warm generous God. But also understand that sometimes to get to the next glorious thing you got to drink a bitter cup.

[31 : 32] And to understand that even the bitter cup the ultimate bitter cup that Jesus drank is a signal of his inclination toward generosity. How can he who did not spare his own son how will he not also freely give us all things?

Romans 8. So that's one thing we see in this idea of the God who gives life to all things and the God who signed his own death warrant.

And there's one last thing that's really quick. In addition to the personality of God you see the authority of God. What do I mean by that? Well the God who gives life to all things, those are what we would call creator rights.

The God who creates you has rights over you. You're not your own, you're his, he made you. And then to double down on his authority over you, we also have redeemer rights. Because he went to the cross and died for you. As Paul says, you are not your own, you are bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

[32 : 42] So we've got this idea of the personality of God, his prosperity, his warmth, his inclination toward blessing. And yes, sometimes we pass through the wilderness. But we also have the authority of God.

He gets to tell us what to do. He gets to tell us what to do because he made us. And he gets to tell us what to do because he bought us with the precious blood of his son. And so that kind of leads us to the end of the passage where Paul says, keep the commandment, pure and unstained, until the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

Let me pray for us and then I'll introduce communion. the devil lies to us, Lord, and honestly our own indwelling sin does as well.

We forget how good you are, how kind you are. We forget, God, who you are.

So please, Lord, use this time to restock the truth on our shelves and warm our hearts to the God who is both of Eden and of Gethsemane, the God of creation and the God of the cross.

[34 : 03] And now, Lord, as we turn to the table, would you bless our time just observing your kindness to us? As we said a moment ago, we were not our own.

We are not our own. We were bought with a price. You bought us with the blood of the Lord Jesus. And now, as we partake of the table, observing what you have given to redeem us to yourselves, would you give us faith, would you give us insight into your goodness?

It's in Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Jesus' Nab Nab Amen.

Amen.