**The Pastoral Epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus**

***Lesson 9: Fight the Good Fight***

**Series principal Bible verses: *1 Timothy 1:15-17****: Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.  But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.  Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Bible passages for Lesson 9**:

**1 Timothy 6:11-16a.** 11But you, man of God, flee from all this (the love of money), and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 12Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 14to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

**2 Timothy 1:8b-12.** Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. 9He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

**2 Timothy 3:12-15.** 12In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**2 Timothy 4:2-5.** 2Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

**Lesson Objective**: Though we will face persecution, false teachers will arise and hard times will come, we are charged with remaining faithful and persevering – not with ensuring we are effective. God has secured the victory over sin and death. Our faithfulness ensures we participate in that.

**Introduction:** Paul is facing challenges as he writes to Timothy. After telling Timothy to “fight the good fight, he says he is “already being poured out like a drink offering” and that the time for his death is near. Since he has “fought the good fight,” “finished the race,” and “kept the faith,” he is prepared to receive the gift of eternal life promised to all of us who persevere.

**Major Point 1**: Followers of Jesus will face persecution, evil people will thrive, and false teachers will emerge. **2 Tim. 3:12-13**

1. Jesus tells his followers they will be hated for his name’s sake and because the world hated him first (Matt. 10:22, Matt. 24:9, John 15:18–27). He calls on them to persevere. Why does the world hate Jesus and his followers?
2. Is being hated by the world evidence of being faithful? Is it a guarantee that we’ve been faithful?
3. Should we claim to be persecuted in the U.S. when others face far greater persecution in other countries? Should we be wary of calling out persecution?

**Major Point 2**: Like Paul, we should “fight the good fight of the faith.” **1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:7**

1. Paul tells Timothy to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” Is that what it means to “fight the good fight”? Is there more?
2. Does this mean something different for us in the 21st century than it meant to Timothy in the first century?
3. James says: “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” Is he saying the same thing as Paul is here?

**Major Point 3**: God’s saving work is done. Our “fight” is not one necessary to securing a victory over death and Satan but works toward the perfecting of our faith.

1. Jesus says this to his followers in John 16: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Do we live like the victory has been won?
2. In other situations, do you find you “fight” harder knowing the victory has been won or less hard because victory does not rest with you? Does it motivate you that God has “destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”?

**Call to Action**: What does fighting the good fight and persevering in the face of challenges mean in your life as compared with Timothy or Paul? What about other Christians over the centuries?

**Conclusion**: This is the final lesson from the Pastoral Epistles. Ponder what the previous lessons have taught us about what it means to “fight the good fight” moving forward.