

June 14, 2026

Pastor Prieue

Third Sunday after Pentecost

1 Timothy 6:11-16 NIV

¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, 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. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Paul's Charge to Timothy

1. Called by God to Eternal Life
2. Charged by God to Fight the Good Fight

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. There are two books of the Bible that are pretty specifically responsible for me being a pastor, and though I didn't know it, their influence started even before I was born. At my ordination here at Mount Olive, my Dad gave me this homemade card, with a picture he had dug out of the albums of him holding me at my birth, while my mom looked on and smiled. Inside he wrote, "Dear Tim, a.k.a. Rev. Timothy Prieue, guard what has been entrusted to your care... guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who live is us." and a few other passages from 1st and 2nd Timothy. Then at the bottom he wrote, "Your mother and I knew before you were born what your name would be—Timothy. The rest was up to the Lord."

I can remember back to highschool when I really started to read these two epistles carefully, Paul's letter's to Timothy, and they quickly became my favorites. I'd read the opening lines, "**To Timothy my true son, my dear son in the faith,**" and think, "This one feels like it was addressed straight to me." Though obviously, Paul wrote these letters to a different Timothy 2000 years ago. I kinda wish everyone could have verse like that addressed to them by name.

Now Timothy wasn't actually Paul's biological son, but he was his son in the faith, a boy who had been taught the Scriptures by his Jewish mother and grandmother, but whose father was a Greek unbeliever. Then a little later on then, Timothy had learned very likely from Paul's preaching on his missionary journeys that the truths of the Scripture pointed to Christ Jesus, raised from the dead. Eventually, Timothy became a traveling companion of Paul and a pastor. Now Paul, who had spent three years in Ephesus, left Timothy his right-hand man behind in the city of Ephesus as their pastor. He was writing to Timothy to encourage him in his faith and in his ministry, especially in the midst of some false teachings and false teachers who were posing a challenge to him.

Now for me, besides also being a pastor name Timothy, part of the reason these books appeal to me so much is because of the intense calls to action that Paul gives to Timothy, using some sports imagery and competition language kind of like a half time speech that gets me all stoked up and ready to run through a wall! It's like the moment in *Remember the Titans* where the coach calls a timeout while the team's losing to give them a peptalk, "I don't want them to gain another yard. You make sure that they remember forever...the night they played the Titans," and the team is compelled to a victory effort.

But this is not a movie or a football game, nor an empty charge to just muster up a better effort. Our sermon text today gives us **Paul's Charge to Timothy** in the sight of the living God, a charge based on the 1. eternal life that God had called him to, and 2. a charge to fight the good fight in his life and ministry.

Now our whole sermon text section, which comes at the end of the letter is really Paul's charge for Timothy to live a godly life. It's a sanctification section, with a number of commands and instructions for Timothy on what to do, and how to live a holy life and how to carry out ministry. But these commands are built on and empowered by the gospel! We must always remember that our godly living is entirely the result of the truths of our justification—truths already written about by Paul to Timothy, that Pastor Raasch preached on last week—the fact, the declaration, the trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance—that Christ Jesus came into the world to save the worst of sinners like you and me, and not just the fake or mild sinners we sometimes pretend to be who only have little white lies and little oopsies, but the real, big, and desperate sinners that we actually are, like Paul the murderer and blasphemer and violent man.

Now right in the middle of this passionate charge, Paul reminds Timothy that the God who called Paul to faith and used him as an example that every sinner can be saved, is the same God who called Timothy to faith and eternal life. Timothy had been given the Greek name which meant “honoring God” and had been taught from infancy the Scriptures which made him wise for salvation. He had received Paul's message which connected those Scripture's to Jesus Christ, and that message of the gospel brought life and immortality to light in the heart of Timothy. So Paul commands Timothy to, **“Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.”**

It's the call of the gospel that first initiates life in the heart of lost and condemned creatures like us. We don't act first, but while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, blind, dead, enemies of God. And this grace shown to us through the great appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grace that gives life to the dead, it makes the unwilling willing, it makes the lost found and the blind see. And so, the trustworthy saying we heard last week remains true. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, sinners that he loved just the way he found us. But *he also loves us so much that he doesn't leave us just the way he found us.*

He declared us holy by his blood. He called us to eternal life, and now we, who have been called by God to eternal life by his mercy and grace, have also been charged by God to live a holy life. So Paul makes his inspiring charge to Timothy. **“You, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.** (1 Timothy 6:11). What's the “all this” that he was referencing. In context, Paul had been condemning false teachers who had been robbed of the truth and who considered godliness and ministry as just a means to make money and take advantage of people.

No doubt there are still wolves in sheep's clothing, t.v. preachers preaching that God will solve all your problems if you just give them your money. But maybe more pressing of an issue than charlatan pastors using ministry for the money, is the tendency for our young people especially here in the Fox Valley to steer clear of the ministry because they might think they won't make enough money. They'll be poor if they're a called worker, which is not true at all. God has blessed his called servants here with daily bread and more than enough through the generosity and offerings of his people. So, dear young ones, gradeschoolers, highschoolers, college students, or any of you who might have the heart and desire for ministry, don't let money be the things that either persuades or dissuades you, but take to heart the solemn call of the gospel to pursue righteousness, godliness, and possibly also public ministry.

Paul's words to Timothy, the “man of God”, which was a term used for the O.T. prophets, had a particular connection to his ministry, but it's not as if they don't apply to others at all. Beyond the scope of ministry, Paul was also warning against the love of money, not just money itself, but to fall in love with money and let it become a root that grows into all kinds of evil and harmful desires, and even ruin and destruction. Maybe it starts with just a few extra hours at work so you can get a big promotion and pretty soon it takes over your worship life. Or maybe you craved the status and luxury of a big house or the fancy car that you couldn't actually afford and those things now rule your life as you try to stay above water on the payments.

No, **“flee from all these desires and temptations,”** and instead **“Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith.”** Paul is picturing a fierce running away from what is bad and a dedicated, consistent running toward what is good. Chase down the virtues and fruits of the Spirit that come from the life that God has called you to. He's using the language of training for the athletic

games. The Greek word there for “fight” is our word “agonize.” *Agonize the good agony*, or “No pain, no gain!” as we might say.

All of this, ministry and even just life itself, is going to be hard to do in this fallen world. It is going to take discipline and effort and rigorous training, because this is the fight of your life, to fight the good fight of faith—to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. It’s going to be like a wrestling match between the new creation and the old self where God calls us to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. Then the temptation comes, the decision ambushes your conscience—to sin or not sin, to deny self and take up the cross, or to give in and fold.

And the coward that is your sinful nature whispers, “it’ll be okay if I just sin a little and ask for forgiveness later,” or “if I just keep my mouth shut because I don’t want to have to say the words I’ve been called to say out loud to someone who needs to hear it.” And Paul comes with the power and vigor of the Spirit of the living God to prod us on to keep fighting. **“Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and about which you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pilate, made his good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot of blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Make sure that you remember forever the sacrifice of Christ Jesus our Lord, who bled and died for you, and be faithful until he returns.

Timothy, there’s no backing down in this fight. You follow in the footsteps of Christ Jesus who went to his death, proclaiming the truth of God. His strength goes with you and before you, to help you to resist the devil so that he flees from you, to steer clear of every wrong path, to speak the words that God has given you to say, and to take hold of the eternal life to which you were called. Since you’ve been called to life, fight the good fight and take hold of that life by the power of the Spirit.

And on that day when Jesus appears, according to God’s own good timing, with the crown of righteousness in store, will all the agony and striving and pain have been worth it? You’d better believe it because your God is the **“blessed and only Ruler, the King of Kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.”** And on that day, he’s coming back to draw near to you, to draw you into his unapproachable light, and let you see his face. To him be glory forever and ever. Until that day, fight the good fight. Amen.