

## Fight the Good Fight of Faith

### 1 Timothy 6:12

**Thesis:** Let's talk about how to respond when we encounter times of difficulty, when we experience times when there is a gap between our current reality and our preferred future

**Text:** *Fight 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 (1 Timothy 6:12).*

Last week I gave a financial update regarding where Calvary is. There is a significant gap between our current reality and our preferred future.

A gap between current reality and preferred future is often present for people of faith. You can think back to the time of Moses.

*The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:7-10).*

The Lord tells Moses that he has heard the cry of his people in slavery and suffering. This is their current reality.

God says that he has come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them to their promised land. This is their preferred future.

The way that the Lord bridges the gap between their current reality and their preferred future was through a process and partnership with Moses and the people. The Lord led them from where they were to where he wanted them to go. And, the Lord used human agents to partner with him for his plans, purposes, promises, and prophetic words. Together, they overcome insurmountable odds and obstacles.

Can you imagine what the children of Israel felt as they stood on the shores of the Red Sea? Pharaoh's army was behind. An ocean stood in front. Their promised land lay way to the East. What a gap! They Lord rescued them supernaturally.

When they got to the promised land the first time, their current reality hit them in the face. Here they faced giants and fortified cities. Yes, the promised land looked great; it was an amazing preferred future. **This time the Lord did not just wipe out the enemies and obstacles before them and hand the promised land to them. They were invited into a journey of faith. But their hearts melted in fear and unbelief as they looked at the gap between where they were and where God wanted them to go.**

When the children of Israel got to the promised land again 40 years later, the Lord told them he had given them the land. And, they had to go in and possess the land. Again, their current reality was that they were on the other side of Jordan facing giants and fortified cities. Their preferred future was they promised land-- the plans, purposes, promises, and prophetic words of the Lord. The promised land was theirs positionally; however, they had to go and fight for what God had promised and given to them in partnership with the Lord and with each other. **This time, they rose up in faith and courage, they fought through fear and discouragement, and they stepped out in obedience to take possession of their preferred future one step at a time.**

Times of difficulty and difficult news impact each of us differently. Sometimes we feel anxious, or even fearful. Sometimes we get discouraged when we see the gap between where we are and where we want to go. Sometimes we are tempted to give up. At other times, we get energized by the struggles and challenges, launching out in vision and energy.

Today, I want to talk about how to respond when we encounter times of difficulty, when we experience times when there is a gap between our current reality and our preferred future. You can relate these truths to your own personal situation, to your family, to your church, to your community, to your nation, or to whatever the Lord is saying to you.

### **Fight the Good Fight of Faith**

*Fight 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 (1 Timothy 6:12).*

You and I are called to rise up and fight. We are invited to fight the good fight of faith. A passive spirit keeps many people from getting in action and fighting. You don't rise up

and fight in passivity. God wants us to get in action and to take hold of that for which he took hold of us. We are believers, people of faith. We have confessed that we are following the Lord, the Captain of the Army of the Hosts of Heaven. One application of our confession is that we must get in action and lay hold of the preferred future the Lord places before us.

Let's be clear: **Walking with the Lord takes faith and courage.**

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).*

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).*

### **This Day We Fight**

In 2 Kings 13:14-19, we read the story of King Jehoash as he deals with his current reality and preferred future. King Jehoash (Joash) is on the verge of defeat because he has inherited depleted resources in chariots and horsemen from his father (2 Kings 13:7). So, King Jehoash turns to Elisha, "who knows of other chariots and horsemen of Israel who are not of flesh and blood (2 Kings 2:11-12; 6:8-17)" (ESV Study Bible).

*Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" 15 Elisha said, "Get a bow and some arrows," and he did so. 16 "Take the bow in your hands," he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. 17 "Open the east window," he said, and he opened it. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and he shot. "The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek." 18 **Then he said, "Take the arrows," and the king took them. Elisha told him, "Strike the ground." He struck it three times and stopped. 19 The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times"** (2 Kings 13:14-19).*

Listen to what Francis Frangipane says about this passage.

Elisha was angered by the passive spirit in King Jehoash (2 Kings 13:18-19). He saw that the king did not possess the perseverance to pursue his enemies until he fully conquered them.

What does this mean for us? The prophet's anger actually mirrors the Lord's displeasure toward the passiveness or laziness of His people today. Is it hard to believe that Jesus would actually be angry with His Church? Then consider the Lord's word to the church in Laodicea, a church that was overly concerned with its own comfort and passive in its attitude toward spiritual realities. Jesus said, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

Jesus would rather we were hot or cold than lukewarm. Does He still love those He rebukes? Of course, but He calls us to change our attitudes. It is not that passivity or laziness is such a terrible sin, like murder or adultery. It is simply that such attitudes create a psychological prison around believers that actually holds us hostage to our other sins.

The Lord is not pleased with the spiritual passivity and indifference so prevalent among His people. We are aware daily that terrorists could attack with massive destruction; we watch the advance of perversion in our cultures—yet many Christians remain prayerless and inactive. This is in spite of the Lord's promise that if we will come before Him, humbling ourselves in earnest prayer, He will empower us to pursue our enemies and defeat them. But instead of seeking God's face on behalf of the lost, too many of us are immobilized by the grip of a passive spirit.

I am not talking about the level of energy in our bodies, but about the level of fire in our obedience. Elisha could see that King Joash was a quitter by the passive way he struck with the arrows (Francis Frangipane, *This Day We Fight*, p. 28).

Let's choose to say "yes" to the Lord and "no" to a passive spirit. We choose to believe God, to follow the Lord into battle to possess the land— his promises, purposes, plans, and prophetic words for us.

I so appreciate this word from Russ Gressett, one of our elders:

This side of the second coming, there is no true abundance without war. The war is won already, yes... but there is war. As Joshua led the children of Israel into the promised land, there was war. They had to take it. It was not always orthodox, but they had to take it a piece at a time.

So, this day we fight.

## **Fight the Right Battles**

We are not in an era of change, but the change of an era. The Lord is changing how he has dealt with us. The same thing happened for the Joshua Generation.

The midst of change, our anxiety rises. We get uncomfortable. We get challenged. It is tempting to look for someone or something to blame. We can be tempted to turn on each other.

Friendly fire is a reality. We need to be careful not to take out our uncomfortable or anxious feelings against one another.

We can even get mad at the Lord.

Or, we can be tempted to return to Egypt, trying to return to what we had known, to that which was comfortable.

Our God is on the move. He is at work in and through us. He is the one who is changing things in our lives and our world. It is not because he is against us but because he is for us.

We have to fight to possess the land the Lord has given to us. We must fight through enemy lines, enemy fortifications, enemy lies, enemy opposition, and enemy schemes and counterattacks. **And remember, our brothers and our sisters are not our enemy.**

## **Change Our Perspective Regarding How God Provides in the Change of an Era**

Right now, we have a significant gap financially between where we are and where we want to be as a church.

I want to share something again which Russ Gressett shared with me.

When Joshua led the children of Israel into the promised land, the manna and the quail stopped. The provision of God did not stop, but the way it came changed... and it changed toward increase and more abundance, not decrease and lack. Their problem/tendency was going to be switching god's when the abundance was entered into. So God exhorted (paraphrase), "Don't forget me when you are sitting in the houses you didn't build and drinking from the vineyards you didn't plant."

I have a sense that we should be focusing on the increase and on the abundance and on the wisdom of walking in it, understanding the lessons that the manna and the quail taught that generation for the 40 years prior.

Think about the financial history for CCC. It shows faithfulness through the years... but it also shows “just enough.” Not too many years of “more than enough” in there... kind of like the manna and quail. What it does say is that God is a faithful provider.

We know that abundance is a real test (maybe the hardest) and the plan of the enemy may well be to have us focus on “potential lack” so the abundance can hoodwink us... and abundance can definitely hoodwink us.

Calvary, I believe a day of breakthrough is coming financially for us, although I don't know when it will come. I believe that the Lord is going to turn it all around. I trust that the Lord knows what he is doing and knows what is best for us. My prayer is that our financial breakthrough comes soon.

And, if our financial deliverance comes later or in a different way than I expect, I have chosen to trust the Lord, believing the best about him, about you, and about our future.

In the midst of this season of difficulty, I want us to hear a message of faith. God is at work in our body. It may look like a season of change, but we are following him. We are expressing expectant faith, even if we end up looking differently. We may have to restructure, but God still has a plan and purpose for us.

### **Last one standing**

Years ago, I learned a lesson about spiritual warfare. Those of you who know me know that I like unimpeded progress. I want to take the next mountain.

I know that the Lord teaches about pruning in John 15:1-2. I know that the Lord whittled down Gideon's army from 22,000 to 300. And, I want you to know that those ways are counterintuitive for me. I know with my head that the Lord does work that way in our lives; but, my heart has a hard time understanding so.

Years ago, I was in the midst of significant spiritual warfare. I felt like a failure because we weren't advancing and we weren't taking new territory for the Lord.

As I spent time with the Lord, I felt like the Lord said, “I am glad you are still here.”

I know the Lord meant that to encourage me. The Lord was glad that I hadn't given up or given in. But, just being here and not giving up didn't seem like victory to me.

As I prayed, the Lord took me to Ephesians 6:10. Let's read it together.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Ephesians 6:10-18).*

Here is what the Lord was saying to me: If you don't quit, you win. So, don't give up. Don't quit. Don't give in. Keep on standing, and having done all, stand.

Sometimes, standing is winning. Enduring to the end is winning. Not giving up and not giving in are winning.

Someone in the sound of my voice needs to hear that word of encouragement today from your Heavenly Father.

### **Rise up and fight**

It is time to rise up and fight for the plans, purposes, promises, and prophetic words of the Lord.

*"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:6-9).*

## Closing

Let's close by declaring our faith in song: *He's Going to Turn It All Around* (Misty Edwards). I have asked the worship team to come and lead us in worship.

## Love Motivated Warfare

Jesus knew this world was a realm under satanic siege. Planet Earth was not a place of peace but a realm at war. From the casting out of Lucifer and his angels from Heaven, to the temptation in the Garden of Eden, to Babylon and the multiplication of nations under satanic influence, planet Earth has been an embattled world. The idea that somehow our era is less threatened by evil is the height of deception. We must fight if we will follow Christ into victory.

No matter how beautiful the world around us seems, remember there was a serpent lurking in Paradise itself. If Adam and Eve had possessed a war mode mentality, they never would have casually accepted the lies of Lucifer. Likewise today, we need to be wise and walk carefully for "the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). You see, Jesus was always aware that He lived in a war zone. No matter what He was doing -- whether He was laughing with sinners or driving out demons, whether He was healing the sick or training followers -- beneath the surface of His outer activities, the "war mode switch" in Jesus' mind was always "on."

Perhaps a few women among us might argue, "This warfare stuff is a macho thing. I'm just a housewife, a mom. I don't have a war mode." If your child was seriously sick, wouldn't you fight that illness with everything at your disposal? You would fast and pray, and do so from your war mode. If your marriage was under spiritual attack, wouldn't you get before God and war with fervency? The fact is, you know how to fight. Ask your husband if he thinks you have a war mode. You just need something to wake it up, because once you begin to shift into the war gear, in the Holy Spirit you are dangerous!

You see, the war mode is in us all. It may be attached to our instinct for survival, but it is more directly connected with our love for people. I love my nation, so I am warring in prayer on its behalf. Because of love for my family, I war in prayer on their behalf. I love my church, my city and, yes, even my own soul, so I war to protect what I love.

If there is a natural fight instinct, there is a spiritual fight mode as well. It just needs to be awakened, submitted to Christ, and then unleashed against the enemy. If you have a love mode, you also have a war mode. God has created the war mode so we can protect the people we love.

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Adapted from Francis Frangipane's book, *This Day We Fight!* available at [www.arrowbookstore.com](http://www.arrowbookstore.com).