

WEEK ONE - FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

Read 1 Timothy 6

We first hear of Timothy in Acts 16:1-5 when he becomes one of Paul’s disciples. Only half-Jewish, Timothy had not been circumcised but Paul was mindful that the Jews would not accept Timothy because his father was Greek. Despite speaking out on many occasions against the necessity of new Christians to be circumcised, Paul knew that only by doing this would it be acceptable for Timothy to minister alongside him in the synagogues.

His mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois, were Jews living in the area of Derbe and Lystra. Clearly, they had taught Timothy the faith and he was well spoken of by the elders in Lystra and Iconium.



It is evident that Paul and Timothy developed a strong bond of friendship, although there was about 15 years difference in age. Timothy was well educated but not a confident person and Paul was anxious that he should further develop his understanding of Christian things.

I want to start this study on the second book of Timothy by going back into chapter six of the first book. Having instructed Timothy on how to run a church, the

qualifications of elders and the roles of men and women, Paul also stressed the importance of keeping a pure lifestyle and being a good servant of Jesus Christ.

“But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 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.”
(1 Timothy 6:11-12 NLT)

Earlier, in the book of Acts, Paul speaks about this in relation to himself:

“I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace”
(Acts 20:24).

Paul uses the metaphors of fighting the good fight and finishing the race on a number of occasions, and Timothy with his Greek background will have been familiar with such sporting contests.

- Do we think of ourselves as *‘belonging to God’* and if so, what does this mean to you?
- Do we *‘fight the good fight for what we believe’*?
- Have we a clear understanding of what we believe? Are we prepared to defend our faith?
- Do we *“guard what God has entrusted to us”*? What does this mean?

Timothy may well have been present when Paul received punishments meted out by the authorities, so he was aware of what he too might suffer.

In the natural, fighting the good faith and running the race require preparation, discipline, perseverance, and endurance.

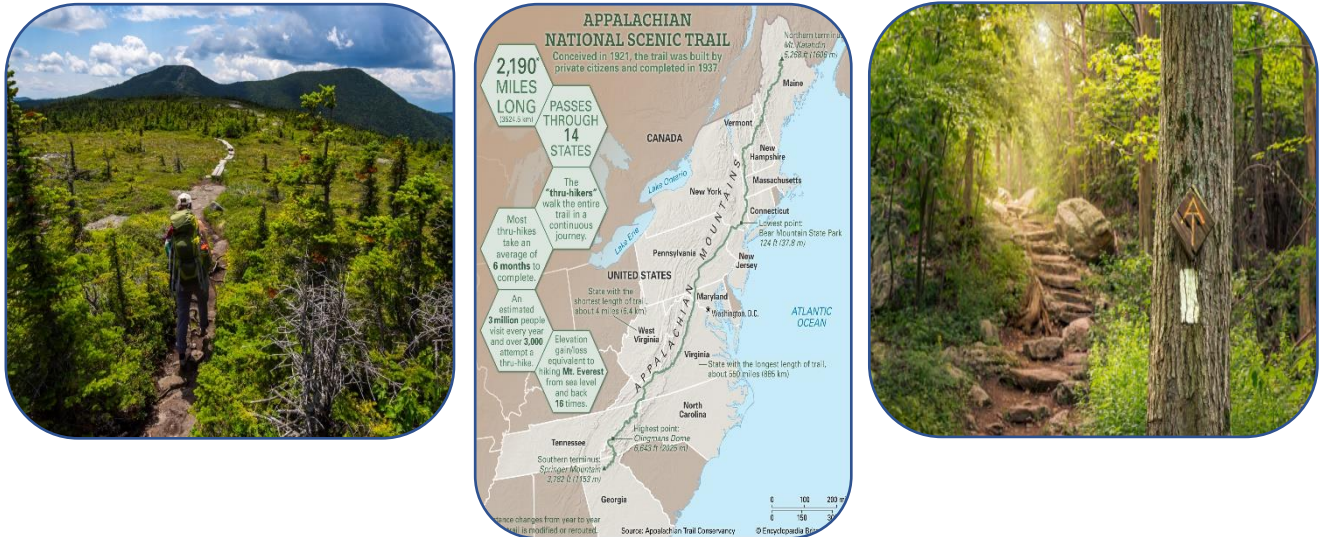
The following quote from Bryson Smith gives a clear picture of this:

“The Appalachian Trail is the longest continuous walking trail in the world. It stretches for over 3,500 kilometres (nearly 2,200 miles) up the east coast of the United States. Walking the Appalachian Trail is virtually the equivalent of hiking from Sydney to Darwin, or from Land’s End to John O’Groats three times. It’s a long walk. Each year, about 2,000 wide-eyed bushwalkers try their hand at the Appalachian Trail. Very few make it. Half the walkers don’t even make it one-third of the way. One in ten drop out within the first week. There have been cases of people travelling halfway around the world and spending a small fortune on camping equipment, only to pull out after three days of walking. It seems that they turn up expecting a nice stroll through the woods with the sun shining, birds singing and squirrels playing.

What they get are rocks, mountain climbing, rain, hypothermia, ticks, bears, and snakes. It just isn't what they expected.

As the saying goes, 'When the going gets tough the tough get going.' When things get difficult – when things aren't as easy as you thought they might be – that's when you see a person's true colours. That's when you see what people are made of."

I believe this is what Paul is trying to get Timothy to understand.



Ask a boxer or an athlete about their training regimes, their diet, the amount of time they have to commit. It is not for the faint-hearted. Nor is being a Christian.

- How much time do we commit to God?
- What is our spiritual 'diet'?
- Are we prepared for the demands of a walk with God?

There are many people who think that being a Christian means to be 'good', to help other people, to come to church when it's convenient.

- What do you think being a Christian mean?
- Do we have it in us to 'persevere'?

Prayer

Father God, help each one of us to walk in your ways, to persevere when things get hard and in everything, to give you thanks for your love, your grace, mercy, and blessings. Amen