

Good afternoon! It's good to be in the house of the Lord today. We are so thankful to be here. It's wonderful to see those of you that are here, and to those of you watching by way of Facebook, we are grateful and thankful to have you as well.

Psalm 107:2

²Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
I am glad to be among the redeemed of the Lord, aren't you? If you're happy to be here this morning, say Amen.

Is there anyone here this afternoon that has a prayer request they'd like to give in?

Heavenly Father, as we come before you this morning, we ask that you touch each and every person here this morning. We ask that you touch those who are in need, Lord, and give them peace, joy and comfort.

Lord, we know that nothing is hidden from your sight. You know our deepest needs even before we pray. You said we should ask, and Father, right now, we are asking.

I pray that you will free every burdened heart under the sound of my voice today Lord, and give them the peace that passes all understanding.

Help them to know that they can "cast all their cares" upon you. Bless this service today Lord as we continue to give you all the praise, honor, and glory, in your wonderful name we pray, Amen.

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

HOLD ON

Before I begin this afternoon, I want to tell you a story. It's a story about Holding on.

On September 2, 1987, a plane for Eastern Express Airlines left Portland, Maine, headed for Boston, Massachusetts.

Shortly after takeoff, the pilot and the co-pilot thought they heard a strange sound coming from the back of the plane.

The pilot, Henry Dempsey, decided to investigate. As he reached the tail section, the plane hit an air pocket; and he was tossed against the rear door.

He quickly found the source of the strange sound. The rear door had not been properly latched before takeoff, and it suddenly flew open. Henry was instantly sucked out of the jet.

The co-pilot, seeing the red light indicating an open door, radioed the nearest airport, requesting permission to make an emergency landing.

He reported that the pilot had fallen out of the plane, and he requested a helicopter search of that area of the ocean.

But after the plane landed, ground crews made an astonishing discovery.

What they found was not only remarkable, but it was also unbelievable.

It bordered on being miraculous. They found the pilot, Henry Dempsey, holding on to the outdoor ladder of the aircraft.

Somehow after being sucked out of the plane, while falling to his death, he had caught the ladder.

He held on for 10 minutes as the plane was flying 200 miles an hour 4,000 feet above the ground.

And then, when the plane landed while going close to one hundred miles an hour, Henry's head came within 6 inches of being slammed into the ground!

According to reports, it took airport personnel several minutes to pry Henry's fingers loose from the ladder he was hanging onto. He was holding on with everything he had and probably with more strength than he ever knew he had.

He was desperate. He was going to do whatever it took To hang on. The winds were against him. They knocked him around...But he held on.

1. When the plane turned, the laws of physics were against him.
2. Centrifugal force threatened to throw him loose But he held on!
3. Way beyond the limit of his physical capacity,
4. When his strength was used up,
5. When adrenaline was exhausted,
6. Something in his mind simply shutdown the ability to let go.

Against all odds...

1. He held onto the plane!
2. Somewhere in the back of his mind Henry Dempsey understood,
3. Through his terror and exhaustion,
4. “Hold on and live; or let go and die.”

I believe that’s the kind of tenacity that Paul has in mind when he tells Timothy to “Fight The good fight of faith” and to “lay hold on eternal life...”

And I believe Paul’s advice to Timothy is exactly what the Spirit is speaking to this church right now!

We have to Fight the Good fight of faith. We are in the fight of our lives!

Hell has risen up to make war against the church.
Collectively, we have been sucked out of the door of the plane!

Like never before, every area of our society and every area of our government is arrayed against the church.

And, If that's not enough, we are dealing with other things that consistently threaten to shut down our ability to be together.

You need the church!

Hell will do whatever it can to keep you away from the church.

Because, on your own, when you are isolated... it's a lot easier to rob you of eternal life.

This fight will never end.

Right now it's one thing. Tomorrow it will be something else.

This world will always be a hostile environment for faith!

This world will always be the arena for a struggle between the spiritual life that has been born within you and carnal man that seeks to kill you.

You'll never graduate from this fight.

1. Faith, by its very nature, demands a struggle on the part of the believer.
2. There will always be an enemy trying to come against you.
3. There will always be evidence that confronts you.
4. This world will always come against your faith.
5. But that's the very nature of faith!

Faith demands the fight

1. Faith demands that you ignore what your eyes see.
2. Faith demands that you ignore what human knowledge says.

3. Faith demands that you take hold of what you cannot see.
4. Faith inspires you to believe that this world is not all that there is!
5. Faith reaches for eternity and takes hold of eternal things.
6. and this world will always struggle against that.

Listen... There are only two eternal entities in this world.

1. The first is your soul...
2. you are going to live forever somewhere.
3. The second is the church.
4. The church is the only institution in this world that will survive into eternity!
5. The enemy of your soul understands something...
6. If he can cut you off from the church, he can claim your eternal soul!

That's what he's fighting for.

1. This is bigger than a disease.
2. This is bigger than the struggles of life.
3. This is bigger than a little compromise here and there on things that have to do with holiness and righteousness.
1. This is about your soul!
2. This is about your eternity!

In **Ephesians 6:12**, the Apostle Paul says, **"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."**

This battle is spiritual and the goal of the fight is eternal life.

And make no mistake... This is a fight!

The language that Paul uses here goes far beyond a simple contest of wills or a friendly wrestling match...

He implies that you should be straining with everything that you have...

1. every muscle in your body should be engaged,

2. every nerve ending should be screaming with exhaustion,
 3. every part of you should be fully and completely committed,
 4. because this is more than just the fight of your life...
- this is a fight for your eternity!

We need to get a fresh perspective on the daily battle that we face.

1. This isn't about the here and now.
2. This isn't about a few minor things lost or gained.
3. This is about eternity!!!!

What Paul is saying to Timothy is that the same urgency that gripped Henry Dempsey when he found himself outside of the airplane, hanging on to the rung of a ladder, needs to be evident in your life!

You gotta get this!

1. Whatever it takes,
2. you must hold on.
3. No matter what life throws at you,
4. you must hold on.
5. No matter how the enemy entices you, you must hold on!
6. No matter if your family is against you, you must hold on!
7. No matter if your job is against you, you must hold on!
8. No matter if your past is against you, you must hold on.

Because what we are fighting for is eternal life!

Hold on to Eternal Life

One thing about our verses is that some of the urgency gets lost in the translation.

Paul is making reference to a life and death struggle, but the language is so critical...“lay hold on eternal life...”

The word he uses is much stronger than that.

It has an additive to it in the Greek language, that intensifies the force of it.

It's a strong statement, with violent connotations, that matches the admonishment to fight.

This isn't a casual grip. This is the language of war.

Hang on, tightly...

Get a hold of this thing, with everything you have.
The same way that Henry Dempsey was hanging on to that
airplane...

Paul is telling Timothy to absolutely hold nothing back, to put everything he has into it, to give it everything he's got, and long after he wants to throw in the towel and quit...long after he wants to give up and let go, to keep holding on.

1. Because what you are hanging on to is eternal life!
2. This is not a passive thing, where you just hang on in a casual way, while you are engaged in something else... no!

Paul said, this world is attacking your faith...

1. your circumstances are attacking your faith...
2. some of your worldly associations are attacking your faith...
3. some of the company you keep is attacking your faith...
4. some of the things that you have allowed into your life are attacking your faith...

And Paul is telling Timothy

that he needs to realize just how critical this fight really is...

Hang on with everything you have within you because this is about more than just faith as a principle,

1. this about more than casual Christianity,
2. This is about eternal life!
3. This is about your eternal future.
4. Whatever it takes, you've got to hold on!

Be aggressive...Be tenacious...Be proactive...

1. There are some associations that need to end...
2. there are some things you need to get out of your life...
3. there are some things that have crept in over time,
4. some things that you have allowed to rise up again in your heart...

5. you need to get those things under the blood of Jesus because they are undermining your faith, they are loosening your grip, and you can't afford to lose your grip on eternity!!!

Revelation 3:11 says, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Listen to me... the goal of your enemy is to rob you blind in broad daylight of the crown of eternal life.

This isn't Paul speaking in Revelation, this is Jesus...

He said, **“I am coming quickly...but until that day arrives, let me warn you...”**

Hold FAST to what you have...

don't let anyone rob you of your crown!

My goodness... that should provoke some response in your spirit.

Don't let anyone rob you of your crown!

Jacob Held On To God...

I did a Sunday School lesson a while back about Jacob wrestling with God.

I hope you can remember the lesson!

And when I think about holding on, with everything that you have, he comes to mind.

When he finally returned home from Laban's house, there was a terrifying night, where he knew that he would have to confront his brother Esau on the very next day.

Esau, who had been spotted approaching with an army of men 400 strong.

The Bible said he sent everyone away and spent the night alone.

His plan was to have a little prayer meeting with God.

Suddenly the door of his life flew open, and he was sucked out into the turmoil of a spiritual fight for his life.

Suddenly there was a man there who confronted him. Maybe his first thought was, it was Esau; maybe he thought it was a total stranger who had come to rob and kill him.

But regardless, it was a fight like he had never been in before

1. —all night long,
2. rolling and wrestling in the dirt.
3. Getting sweaty, dirty, and tired, Jacob struggled all night long into the early morning.
4. And somewhere along the way, he realized this was more than just a human struggle;
5. It was a wrestling match with the angel of the Lord.

Eventually, the angel commanded Jacob, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.”

1. They had wrestled throughout the long night hours,
2. and the sun was beginning to appear on the horizon.

No doubt it had been a long, grueling night.

And the angel was giving Jacob a chance to give up and let go. But Jacob held on.

1. The weariness was telling him to let go,
2. but he held on.
3. The bruises and open wounds from the fight were screaming, Give up and just let go.
4. But he held on.

Why? Because somewhere deep in his spirit, Jacob understood...

1. There is more going on here than just a little wrestling match.
2. Something is about to change. Something is about to break.
3. If only I can hold on!!!

Something in his spirit was telling him that if he let go now, he would never receive everything God intended for him to have... So he declared, "I will not let you go, except you bless me."

1. Even after the angel touched him, and gave him a limp that he would have for the rest of his life, He still held on.
1. Jacob knew that without holding on until the blessing came, the entire wrestling match would have been for nothing.

His life was going to be defined by that night...
If he let go now, he would just carry the scar of the limp as his only memory of this fight....

Listen...There are gonna be some scars...

1. There is going to be some fallout from the fight...
2. There is going to be some lasting ramification...
3. Some separations are gonna have to happen in your life if you hang on...
4. some changes will take place if you hang on...
5. some things will never be the same if you hang on...

But Jacob was determined to get more from this fight than just a limp that he would carry for the rest of his life!

He was determined that if he was going to limp into his future... it was going to be a future that was blessed by God!

Bless me, he cried!

He had that same tenacity of spirit that gripped Henry Dempsey,

1. "If I hold on, I live;
2. if I let go, I die."

... And God Held On To Jacob

We often preach about Jacob holding on to God. But listen to me...
God was also holding on to Jacob.
God could have ended that wrestling match anytime He wanted to.
But He was determined to hold on to Jacob because Jacob was willing to hold on to Him!

Listen.. because this is what I feel like the Spirit is saying to the church...

1. Keep holding on...
2. God is the master of the wind,
3. the maker of the storm,
4. and he is with you in the middle of your crisis.

This is the promise...

As long as you are determined to hold on to him...He's gonna hold on to you!

Listen... Jacob can't win that wrestling match by himself...

1. God has to hold onto him
2. even as he's holding onto God!

I just believe that in the middle of everything that is going on around us, God is telling me to tell his church...If you will hang on with everything you have,

1. what you have will be enough,
2. because you've got God fighting for you.
3. The one you are holding onto is holding onto you!
4. The one you are clinging to, in the midst of the storms and turmoil of this life, is holding onto you!

John 10:27-28 says, “²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, **neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.**”

Close

This fight is not going away.

The daily struggle of living for God is just going to get more intense with each passing day.

The Navy SEALs have a saying: The only easy day was yesterday.

The point is simple...it won't ever get any easier!

Every day is more difficult than the last.

If that's true about being an elite warrior, let me tell you something,

It's also true about living for God.

1. It's only going to get harder...
2. the fight is going to gain intensity...
3. the enemy is going to test you everywhere he can...
4. he's not gonna let up...
5. because he understands that the prize is your soul.
6. Either he's gonna lay claim to it and drag you down to an eternal death,
7. or you are going to cling to the crown of eternal life and walk in heavenly places one of these days.

Here's the way it works...
if the Devil quits fighting, you automatically win.
So let me tell you...he's not gonna quit fighting.
But here's the other side of that coin...

If you NEVER QUIT fighting, then you can't ever lose!

If you will just hold on...God will hold on to you...
and no demon in hell can rob you of the crown of life!

Let me remind you, today...

1. God has a plan for you.
2. He has a purpose for your struggles.
- 3. Whatever you do... Hold on.**