

Message Three

Keeping the Faith

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 4:7c; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 6:12; 1 Thes. 3:2; Jude 3

2 Tim 4:7c	... I have kept the faith.
1 Tim 1:19	Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith.
1 Tim 3:9	Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
1 Tim 4:1	But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons.
1 Tim 6:12	Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.
1 Thes 3:2	And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and encourage you for the sake of your faith.
Jude 3	Beloved, while using all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

I. In the New Testament, faith is both objective and subjective:

- A. The objective faith refers to the subject of our believing, that is, to the things in which we believe; this objective faith includes the contents of God's New Testament economy—Eph. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:7c:
 1. *The faith* in Ephesians 4:13 is not faith as a believing action but the objective faith.
 2. The items of the objective faith are only those items that are related to our salvation—in other words, only those items that relate to Christ's person and work—John 3:16; 1:18; 1 John 4:9.
- B. Subjective faith has to do with our action of believing—John 3:15-16:
 1. According to this meaning, to have faith in the Lord is to believe in Him.
 2. All genuine believers in Christ are one in having faith related to Christ.
- C. In 1 Thessalonians 3:2 faith is not only subjective, referring to the saints' believing, as in verses 5, 6, and 10, but also objective, referring to what we believe in, as in 1 Timothy 3:9; 4:1; and 2 Timothy 4:7:
 1. These two aspects of faith involve one another.
 2. Our believing (subjective faith) is out of the things we believe and in the things we believe (objective faith).

II. "I have kept the faith"—v. 7c:

- A. *The faith* here is objective.
- B. The word *faith* in this verse implies our believing in Christ, taking His person and His redemptive work as the object of our faith—1 Tim. 1:19; Gal. 1:23.
- C. To keep the faith is to keep the entire New Testament economy of God—the faith concerning Christ as the embodiment of God and the mystery of God and the church as the Body of Christ and the mystery of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4.

III. First Timothy 6:12a says, "Fight the good fight of the faith":

- A. To fight for the faith means to fight for God's New Testament economy.
- B. To fight the good fight of the faith is to fight for the contents of the complete gospel according to God's New Testament economy—Eph. 1:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:4.
- C. Because of the different teachings, the church had already become degraded and had deviated from the faith—v. 3.
- D. Paul charged Timothy to fight against the deviation from the faith, which is to fight the good fight of the faith—6:12a.

IV. In 1 Timothy 6:12b Paul goes on to say, “Lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called”:

- A. To fight the good fight of the faith in the Christian life, we need to lay hold on this life—the eternal life, the divine life—and not trust in human life—v. 12b.
- B. We fight the good fight of the faith not only objectively but also subjectively by laying hold on the eternal life—v. 12b.
- C. We need to lay hold on the eternal life; then we will be able to fight the good fight of the faith—v. 12.

V. A proper Christian life involves keeping the faith for participation in the divine riches in God’s economy—1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 6:12; Titus 1:4; Jude 3:

- A. The economy of God is a matter in faith, that is, a matter that is initiated and developed in the sphere and element of faith—1 Tim. 1:4.
- B. God’s economy, which is to dispense Himself into His chosen people, is not a matter in the natural realm nor in the work of the law but in the spiritual sphere of the new creation through regeneration by faith in Christ—2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-26.
- C. By faith we are born of God to be His sons, partaking of His life and nature to express Him—John 1:12-13:
 - 1. By faith we are put into Christ to become members of the Body, sharing all that He is for His expression—Rom. 12:4-5.
 - 2. This is God’s plan, which is carried out in faith, according to God’s New Testament economy.

VI. We need to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience—1 Tim. 3:9:

- A. The faith refers to the things we believe in, the things that constitute the gospel—Rom. 1:1, 3-4.
- B. The mystery of the faith is mainly Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.
- C. In order to hold the mystery of the faith, we must have a pure conscience, a conscience purified from any mixture—1 Tim. 3:9; 1:19.

VII. Jude says in his Epistle, “I found it necessary to write to you and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints”—v. 3b:

- A. *The faith* in this verse is not subjective; it is objective.
- B. The word *faith* here does not refer to our believing but refers to our belief, to what we believe.
- C. The faith in Jude 3 denotes the contents of the New Testament as our faith, in which we believe for our common salvation—Acts 6:7; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13.
- D. This faith, not any doctrine, has been delivered once for all to the saints.
- E. For this faith we should contend—1 Tim. 6:12.

VIII. We all need to “arrive at the oneness of the faith”—Eph. 4:13a:

- A. The faith mentioned in this phrase is objective faith.
- B. The oneness of the faith depends on our full knowledge of the Son of God—v. 13.
- C. Only when we take Christ as the center and we focus on Him can we arrive at the oneness of the faith.