

**Tough Faith is Fighting Faith**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley**  
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In case you haven't figured it out by now: we're in a war. You did not sign up for this war and you were not drafted for this war; you were born into it. We all were. Life is a battle. We have an enemy who wants to steal, kill and destroy. We must fight for our marriages – our families – our health – our finances. We must fight for our destiny and our future.

This is nothing new. God's people have always come under attack. That's why we're in a series on Tough Faith for Tough Times. As your pastor I need to prepare you for those attacks.

Today I'm preaching on Tough Faith is Fighting Faith. The first thing I've got to teach you is that faith is a fight! There are way too many passive Christians with no fight in them. But the Psalmist said in Psalm 144:1 says:

*Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*

Too many of us think, "Yes Lord, You're my strength – You fight for me. God says, "I will fight for you, but some of the fight I do through you!" The first thing God has to do is not teach us *how* to fight, but He teaches us *to* fight.

Faith is a fight. But it's a good fight. How do I know that? Because 1 Timothy 6:12 says:

*Fight the good fight of faith.*

When I read this I asked myself and the Lord: what's a good fight? The answer is a good fight is a fight you win. So when the Bible says, "Fight the good fight of faith," to me it's saying, "When you fight in faith, you fight to win."

Tough faith is fighting faith. It's not sissy faith. It's not wimpy faith. It's not Tiny Tim tiptoeing through the tulips faith. Tough faith does not avoid conflict! Tough faith fights to the finish.

There are too many Christians who constantly run from the fight of faith. They get knocked down in life a few times and they give up. Marriage gets hard and they give up on the marriage. Work gets hard and they quit their job. Times get tough and they run away – some even run from God.

But tough faith does not run away. Tough faith does not give up or give in.

Tough faith does not tap out or wimp out. Tough fight fights to win because it is impossible for faith to lose! Tough faith overcomes!

There are two ways to look at the fight of faith.

1- The phrase “fight of faith” can mean the struggle *for* faith.

We all face the struggle to overcome doubt, the struggle to believe God, the struggle to trust His promises in tough times. Faith is something we have, but also something we must keep pursuing, keep fighting for.

In 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul says at the very end of his life, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

Fighting the fight of faith is a struggle that a true Christian never finally abandons until he attains the crown of righteousness from the Lord.

Matthew 24:12-13 says that in the last days *the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.* Tough faith is a fight to the finish.

2- The phrase “fight of faith” can also mean that we fight *with* faith.

In other words, faith is a weapon used to gain the victory over our enemies. And there are three enemies we must overcome: the world, the flesh and the devil.

The devil fights with all kinds of schemes. Ephesians 6:10-11 says:

*Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*

Satan comes against us many ways – he has schemes and tricks and strategies and plans. But greater is He that is in us and for every way Satan comes against us – God has seven ways to defeat him. Deuteronomy 28:7 says:

*The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.*

So how do we fight Satan? We fight with faith. Ephesians 6:16 says:

*Above all, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

How many of Satan’s arrows? All of them! Tough faith fights with faith and faith defeats all of Satan’s schemes. How do we fight with faith? Ephesians 6:17 goes on to say we fight with *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Jesus is our example and that's how He fought and won the good fight of faith against Satan. Matthew 4:1-10 gives the account to Jesus being tempted by the devil. When Satan tempted Jesus to feed Himself by turning stones into bread, *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

When Satan tempted Jesus to throw himself from the temple so angels would catch Him, *Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

When Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him, *Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"*

Jesus won the battle by talking back to Satan. And what did Jesus say? His Father's Words. Over and over He said, "It is written, it is written, it is written!"

We also win the battle by talking back to Satan. And what should we say? Our Father's words! Over and over we should say, "It is written, it is written, it is written!"

The only way to defeat Satan is through your Father's Word. Revelation 12:11 says:

*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

What's the word of your testimony?

Are the words coming out of your mouth glorifying God or Satan?

Are the words of your mouth magnifying God or your problem?

To overcome Satan we must speak our Father's word in faith. That tough faith – that fighting faith – will defeat Satan every single time.

Another enemy is the world. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 says:

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

The world fights with deception that builds strongholds in our lives. But we have the power to demolish those strongholds! How? 1 John 5:4-5 says:

*This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Only those with tough faith will overcome Satan.  
Only those with tough faith will overcome the world.  
Only those with tough faith will overcome our third enemy.

Now, I know it's easy to blame the devil or the world for our problems, but let me introduce you to your third enemy: yourself!! There is a classic Jack Paar line, "Looking back, my life seems to be one long obstacle course, with me as the chief obstacle." As Pogo said, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

When I speak of self, I speak of what the Bible calls the flesh – which is basically our natural tendency toward selfishness and self-reliance. All of us struggle with our own sin, our own bad attitudes, our own weaknesses and our own stinkin' thinkin'. When I say all of us – I include me.

The reason I'm telling you all of this is to let you know that at Grace Fellowship Church, we have a leadership culture of learning and growth. And it starts with me. Leaders are learners. Those who stop growing will eventually be unfit to lead.

We all have blind spots and we need others to speak the truth in love and give us feedback to help us succeed. We have the understanding that one of our biggest enemies is ourselves. We must ruthlessly fight to discover our own constraints and overcome them.

This takes tough faith. It's easier to not deal with your own issues. It's easier to blame others. It's easier to say, "That's just the way I am, deal with it." It may be easier, but the cost is actually higher. Without the tough faith that fights our issues, we will never become all we can be.

Most of us are aware of many of our issues. We should start there. But we all have blind spots and I encourage you to get people around you who care about you who will speak the truth in love to you.

I don't know any successful people who succeed alone. They all have people who speak into their lives. Tiger Woods has a coach! Tiger won 10 major tournaments and millions of dollars and then thought he no longer needed his coach. So he fired his coach and guess what happened? He did not win a major tournament again for two whole seasons! Guess what? Tiger Woods has a coach!

Every great athlete has a coach. Successful people seek out feedback so they can improve. They know that feedback is the breakfast of champions. They want to know what's holding them back.

If you want to advance at work – talk to your boss and find out what's holding you back.

If you want to improve your marriage – talk to your spouse and find out what’s holding you back.

If you want to do better at school – talk to your teacher and find out what’s holding you back.

I don’t know of any people who failed because they listened to feedback and learn from it. Successful people seek out feedback, learn from it and get even better.

Who’s speaking into your life and building you up? Yes, you need to get into the word and build your faith. But you also need to hang around people who build your faith.

Someone once said, I can tell you who you will be in five years by the books you read and the people you associate with. Proverbs 13:20 says:

*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm.*

Are your close friends building your faith or tearing it down? Faith is a fight and you need people around you who are fighting with you, not fighting against you.

Faith is a fight and faith takes work. We don’t get there all at once. It takes time and effort. All of us have personal constraints – the things that hinder us or hold us back from success, from reaching our goals. That’s why Hebrews 12:1 says:

*Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

When we ignore our constraints, we allow them to limit us; but when we identify and seek to overcome them, we dramatically improve our chances of success – we will win the race.

There are some constraints we can get others to handle for us. For instance – when I was a district manager for a retail chain – I always told my managers, “Hire to your weakness.” In other words, if you’re not good in an area, hire someone who is.

My point is that you can give away some areas of responsibility where you are weak. But some areas cannot be given away.

For instance, I can’t delegate someone to go to the gym for me.

I can’t have someone else have my devotional time for me.

I can’t have someone else talk to my wife and kids for me.

There are some things I must deal with myself.

You will never rise above the constraints you don’t or won’t address.

Personal constraints don't just go away. They must be put away. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says:

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Put away means to render entirely useless, inactive and inoperative – to abolish, destroy, do away with, make of no effect, put an end to.

Change requires effort.

It does not mean to ignore the things we need to change.

It does not mean pretending they're not there.

It does not mean you will automatically grow out of it.

In fact, the meaning here is that some things will not go away on their own! They must be put away.

All of us have attitudes or actions that need to change. We've all got some work to do. What's holding you back? If you don't know, find out. When you find out, do what it takes to change. Put it away! If sin is holding you back, put it away! If the way you think is holding you back, put it away! If attitudes or actions are holding you back, put it away!

We put away those things by recognizing them, refusing to live with them any longer and replacing them with the truth of God's word.

Which reminds me of a story from childhood. I was raised in church where we were taught to turn the other cheek, not to fight. We were taught that all fighting was bad. I was not supposed to fight with my brother and sisters. I was not supposed to fight at school and certainly not at church.

I'll never forget when I was a little kid living in Detroit and I finally got big enough to ride my bike around the block on my own. There was a kid on the other side of the block who was a bully. Every time I went around the block he would chase after me, knock me down and beat me up.

My dad noticed I quit riding my bike around the block. He asked me why. I told him about the bully and he told me these words that set me free. He said, "Son, you can't let anyone bully you like that. Next time he does that, you pick up the nearest stick and beat him with it."

I thought it was a trick or a test or something. I said, "Really?" He said, "Really." The next time I went around the block, the bully came running up to me, but he didn't know he was about to meet a different Joey – a new and improved Joey – G.I. Joey. I told him, "You better leave me alone." He said, "Why, what are you going to do about it?"

I said, "My dad told me if you bothered me anymore I should pick up the nearest stick and beat you with it." He said, "Yeah, right." But I saw the fear in his eyes; he backed off and never bothered me again.

So I began to think about that story and what it was the Lord wanted me to see regarding "a good fight." Then it came to me: the three reasons that was a good fight.

- 1- That was a good fight because I won.
- 2- That was a good fight because I won it without lifting a finger.
- 3- That was a good fight because I won it with words.

Get this – here's the key - I won the fight by speaking my father's words. Jesus won the battle by speaking His Father's Words. And you will win spiritual battles when you speak your Father's Word!

Here's how you fight with tough faith - just like Jesus did. When Satan comes against you with fear – you say, "I refuse the spirit of fear because my Father's word says God has not given me the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and a sound mind."

When Satan comes against you with condemnation – you say, "I refuse condemnation because my Father's word says There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

When Satan comes against you with feelings of inadequacy – you take you the sword of the Spirit and say IT IS WRITTEN - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

When Satan comes against you trying to steal your job or your money – you take you the sword of the Spirit and say IT IS WRITTEN - My God shall supply all of my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Even when it looks like Satan won a victory over you – you take up the sword of the Spirit and say IT IS WRITTEN  
 God always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus.  
 I am more than a conqueror through Him that loved us.  
 No weapon formed against me will prosper!  
 Greater is He that is in me that he that is in the world!  
 If God is for me, who can be against me!

For every attack of Satan – you have the answer – God's answer!  
 For every word from Satan – you have a greater Word – God's Word!  
 Tough faith is fighting faith and it overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil.  
 Tough faith cannot fail! You can do it! You've got our Father's Word on it!