

1 Timothy 6:11,12

Instructions to Timothy

Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

The Eternal Life To Which You Were Called!



“...take hold of the eternal life to which you were called”. It is a striking phrase, don't you think?

This is the only time that I know of that this phrase is used in the New Testament, much less the entire Bible! The only time! What exactly would **“the eternal life”** that we need to **“take hold of”** be referring to? Most people would be under the simple impression that it is referring to the **afterlife** of the Christian. I would contend that it is NOT referring primarily to the afterlife or to heaven. I think it is pretty clear that this is a reference primarily to **THIS life** and God's intentions for the life of the Christ-follower here on earth! It is a part of being born of the Spirit of God into God's NEW creation! This passage is Paul's admonition for young Timothy to be diligent in becoming the Christ-follower that God meant for Him to be – fully engaged in the Spirit's work of new creation! We who believe in the Living Jesus, trust Him, and welcome Him into our lives, were given new life into a New Creation! **[2 Cor. 5:17,18]**



When we gave our hearts to Jesus, He gave us His Spirit to live in us and make us into something NEW! The New Creation supplants or replaces the old fallen creation in us. The old creation is a God-cursed creation that is belligerent to its Creator/God. As God breathed life into the first man, Adam, at the beginning of the old creation, so He has breathed new life through His Spirit into those who enter His New Creation **[JOHN 1:12,13; 3:5-8]**! The old creation came to stubbornly oppose its Creator, and even help Satan, God's arch enemy, to **WAR** against God! But when the Word of God came to His creation, He started what He said was **“the Kingdom of God”** or **“the Kingdom of Heaven”**. Every kingdom has a king and this Kingdom has one too! It is Jesus, the Supreme King – the **“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”**. This Kingdom ruled by King Jesus was to be populated by people who have switched allegiances from the kingdom of **this** world which opposes God, to the opposite and upside down Kingdom which acknowledges, trusts, and coronates Jesus as their rightful King! **[1 Pet. 2:11]** For many years I have labeled this new life with Jesus as King, **“the life of God”** or **“God's life”** – because it is a new life process that belongs to God – that He claims as His domain – the God-driven, Holy Spirit-powered life of obedience and productivity! If it is not Holy Spirit-powered, it is impossible!

It is God's greatest miracle – changing a human heart, molding a person's will to gladly choose to conform to **His** will, and to develop true character that fashions itself after **His** character, not our own! And during the process, God then uses that recreated and transformed person in powerful and effective ways for His own glorious ends and means – which is ultimately to cause MORE people to switch allegiance and enter into His New Creation [**2 Pet. 3:9**] – His upside-down Kingdom where He properly rules and operates in ways opposite to that of the world ! In this upside-down **KINGDOM OF GOD** where Jesus rules our hearts, **humility** is one of the greatest values of its King and citizens, whereas in the **KINGDOM OF EARTH**, **pride** is one of its greatest values! The people loyal to the **KINGDOM OF EARTH** also value **unrighteousness** and enjoy the freedom to **do evil** and accomplish Satan's work of **destruction**! On the other hand, the upside-down **KINGDOM OF GOD** values **righteousness** and enjoys the freedom to **do good** and fulfill God's works of **redemption**! We value "**Godliness**", or being and acting like our wholly good God! We value **purity, generosity, kindness, honesty, agape love** – which is a **giving and self-less love**. The **KINGDOM OF EARTH**, on the other hand, values acts of **ungodliness - lustfulness, greed, brutality, callous indifference**. Across the globe, they run on **hate, meanness, and pure spite**. Their love is a self-serving love and easily falls into **betrayal, abuse, and neglect**. They favor the **ambitious, the brash, the aggressive and cocky/braggadocious**. But the **KINGDOM OF GOD** values **gentleness, meekness, and being "salt and light"** in an unsavory and dark world!



The Kingdom of God is where God reigns! He is recognized as God, and His authority as God is respected by those in this Kingdom. This is where God does the great work of taking fallen people and recreating them into consistent, Spirit-led Christ-followers! So, what am I talking about here? I'm talking about "**the eternal life**" that Paul is talking about in vs. 12. It begins NOW and we take it with us on into eternity! Perhaps you've heard the old saying – "*Dead men's shrouds have no pockets*". In some places they use to wrap dead bodies in a cloth called a death shroud before burial. In fact, some places still do this. I'm sure you have heard the saying that contains the same sentiment – "*You can't take it with you when you die*". That is why it is so inconceivable that most people put all their hopes and dreams and every investment into this life – as if it is all there is! It's like trying to make a brief feast out of an elephants cuticle while ignoring the vast, tasty bulk of the creature that remains! Even those that believe in an afterlife tend to live for this life! But "**the eternal life**" that Paul is referring to in vs. 12 begins in the here-and-now, and travels with us into the next life. So *THIS* life is what the Christ-follower is invested! For the committed Christ-follower, this life in the here-and-now is all about living in the Spirit. When we give ourselves to Jesus, we belong to Him. We spoke of being His slaves or servants by choice, maybe about three weeks ago. Re-creation happens in the here-and-now, beginning after we have given the Spirit of God permission to go ahead with it. Then our base and fallen natures are thrust into the process of undergoing a spiritual metamorphosis, under the creative hand of God! He is remaking us into a "new creature" in His new creation.



*When I was a kid, I would find a chrysalis – the cocoon of a monarch butterfly - on a milkweed. I would cut the stem off, below and above, put it in a big jar, and wait. About 2 weeks later you could see the chrysalis start to turn color, going from green to clear, and then you could see movement inside as the transformed creature inside struggled to break out of his prison and emerge into the world of flowers and sunshine! But it was a mighty struggle and took hours! I remember being impatient! I wanted to reach in and cut that Chrysalis and hurry up the process! But I knew better. The struggle was an important part of the process for the new butterfly! He used that struggle to gain the strength He would need to survive out in the world!

“Fight the good fight of faith”.

Entering into the New Creation in God’s Kingdom brings added struggle and concern and added complications in the short term. But this particular struggle is good! Paul beat His body to make it serve His mind rather than the other way around. He struggled not only against the powers of this world, but also of the spiritual realms where Satan was constantly sabotaging him. But it was all good! He embraced the struggle and learned dependence. He learned that when he was weak, that is when God showed up in strength for him. We are all built for struggle! When we get to heaven we can rest! But for now, to struggle is how we grow strong. It is hard, and there are discouraging setbacks, and sometimes it is three steps forward and two steps backward, and it is taking too long and we are impatient to be better – but despite our necessary challenges, success is guaranteed ***if we persevere and do not give up!*** We pray, and we keep praying, and we read and learn, and we learn to depend upon the Spirit of God, and we give up and give in to what we know is what God wants or doesn’t want, and we serve where we are called to serve, and we bear fruit - and when we do these things, we win, and we keep on winning all the way to the next life where we ultimately attain what has been promised!



Now, here is the thing that makes my head spin. We don’t win or attain ***because*** we were willing to struggle, but because Jesus has already won! He is perfect. He struggled and was not found wanting as we are. But we merely ride into heaven on His coattails. We will focus more on that next week! But the struggle is still necessary and part of the process. How else would we know we are actually saved for *that* part of ***“the eternal life”*** that awaits us in God’s heaven? How else would our devotion to Christ be in evidence? In the meantime, until our time here on earth is over, the struggle is glorious! It should captivate and consume the Christ-follower. We are following our Leader! What could be better?! We grow in the love of God, reliance upon Him, and everything related to Him and to the gospel truth!

“But you, (men, women, or children of God),.. pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (a cut down version of the fruit of the Spirit). ***Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called!”***