

LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE

1 TIMOTHY 6:12-19 • TV122A

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1 Timothy 6:12- 19

“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. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

I'd like for you to turn in your Bible to the book of **First Timothy**. I'm going to read two verses of Scripture that are found in **chapter 6** of the book of **First Timothy**.

Now, our subject today is: **“LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE.”**

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Twice in **1 Timothy chapter 6** the apostle Paul urges those who read this epistle *“to lay hold on eternal life.”*

Listen to **verse 12**, Paul says; *“Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life.”* Then, **verse 19**, *“Lay in store a good foundation against the time to come and lay hold on eternal life.”*

We hear a lot about eternal life. Well, just exactly what is eternal life, what’s Paul talking about here, *“lay hold on eternal life? He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life. And this is the record that God has given us eternal life.”*

Just exactly what is eternal life? Let me say this, it’s more than an eternal existence. This life we are talking about here, which is eternal, is a lot more than living forever. It’s a lot more than eternal existence.

Satan, who rebelled against God and led a multitude of heavenly creatures against God, has eternal existence. He will live eternally. He will live under judgment, he will live under God’s wrath but he will live forever. So, eternal life is more than eternal existence.

The Scripture says, *“The angels they kept not their first estate but sinned against God (are confined to the regions of the damned). They are reserved in everlasting chains, in darkness unto the judgment of that great day.”* They have eternal existence.

And then, unbelievers, wicked men, all the wicked men who have ever lived on this earth have eternal existence, for our Lord said: *“in that day I will say unto them depart from me, bind them hand and foot and cast them into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.”* So, this we know; eternal life is not eternal existence, it’s not just to live forever.

What is eternal life? I will say it’s that life which Adam had in the Garden before he fell!

The Scripture says that *“Adam was created in the image of God.”* God said: *“Let us make men after our likeness in our image.”*

If Adam had never sinned, if Adam had never fallen, he would have continued in that life. He would be living today, six thousand years later. It is that life which Adam had before he fell. It is that life which Adam lost when he fell.

Now, God said to Adam when he gave him the commandment to leave the forbidden tree alone, He said: *“In the day you eat thereof you will surely die.”* He didn’t say someday you will die, He said: *“in that day you will die.”*

Now, Adam lived after he sinned 930 years. He died physically 930 years later. Something happened to Adam the very moment in which he fell. Something happened right then.

He lost something because Adam didn’t know what it was to be afraid. Adam didn’t know what it was to be ashamed. Adam didn’t know what it was to hate until that point, until that moment.

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Now, that's what happened; Adam lost eternal life. Adam lost the life of God. That's what eternal life is. That's what left Adam when he fell.

Eternal life is the life of the eternal God. That's what eternal life is. Eternal life is divine life. It's not fleshly life or physical life. It is not human life or mental life. It is divine life.

It is spiritual life. Sinners are said to be "*dead in sin*" that is, they have not eternal life. They have not divine life or spiritual life or the life of God. They are living physically but they are "*dead in sin.*" Sinners are said to be dead while they live.

My friend, there are several kinds of life. There is the life of the plant; there's plant life, in other words, trees live and trees can die. Flowers live, plants live, and there's vegetable life.

Then, there's animal life, cows and horses, sheep, and your pets live; they live, they have a life. Then there are humans or mental life which every son of Adam has, every son and daughter of Adam lives, they live physically and they live in the flesh.

There are three kinds of life. Somebody said: "There's mineral life." Well, maybe, mineral life, vegetable life, animal life and human life. But, there is another life. There's a life that most people know nothing about. There is spiritual life and there is eternal life. This is what the Scripture is talking about: "*Lay hold upon.*"

You can't lay hold upon something that you already possess. You can't seek something you already have. There is no need of seeking it. There is no need of laying hold on it. There is no reason for reaching for it if you already possess it.

So, there's a vegetable life, an animal life and a human life and there is a divine life. The Scripture says: "*You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.*" The Scripture says: "*We have passed from death unto life.*"

Paul said: "*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" Eternal life is the life of God in a man; it's a new life, and it's a new birth. This is what the new birth is.

It's not just turning over a new leaf or getting religion or joining the church or doing better; eternal life is a resurrection from the dead. This thing of the new life, the new birth, is to be born of God, born of the Spirit of God. It is to receive the divine life of God which I did not have before by nature.

Eternal life is to know God. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed before he went to the cross for His people, the priestly prayer of the Master in which he said in **John 17:3**: "*This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*"

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So, eternal life is to know God. It's to have a living, vital, intimate union with God almighty. This is what Paul's telling us in these two verses: "*Lay hold upon this; lay hold upon eternal life.* As you see the time approaching, "*lay hold upon eternal life.*"

Let me tell you my friend, human life is high above animal life. Do you know how much higher human life is than animal life? Let me ask you a question; how much more valuable is the life of your little boy than the life of your dog?

Well, you say: "Preacher; there's no comparison, that's foolishness, that's foolish talk." I know it sounds foolish doesn't it but I am making a point.

Eternal life is as far above physical life as physical life is above animal life. That's how much more blessed it is, that's how much more valuable it is. Eternal life is as far above physical life, mental life, human life, fleshly life, as fleshly life is above a dog's life.

Now, my friend; death is associated with every form of life and this is why I am saying this: death is associated with every form of life, vegetable life, the plants die. Animal life, the dogs die and the cows die.

Human life: "*It's appointed unto men once to die.*" Eternal life, Christ said; now listen: "*He that believeth on me shall never die.*" Do you see how important it is? Do you see how great it is? "*He that believeth on me shall never die.*"

Now, you say "but every believer is going to die." Here's what the Scripture is saying; when a believer experiences a death of the body, there's no change in that divine and eternal life.

He lays aside the body, but that divine life lives on. It's like a river that continues and deepens and widens until it reaches a sea of paradise. Eternal life begins and it never ends.

There's no change in that divine life; it goes on as it was, unbroken. The death of the body only ushers us into the very presence of God to enjoy eternal glory, eternal love, eternal peace, and eternal perfection for which the believer has always longed and yearned.

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the sky,
I'll bid farewell to every tear
And wipe my weeping eye.

There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble rolls
Across my peaceful breast."

Lay hold on eternal life. When? That's the question.

All right my friend, here's the answer; laying hold of eternal life must begin now, it must begin now. Don't you dream that you will ever obtain eternal life unless you receive it by faith in this life; there's no other possibility.

As physical death leaves you, eternity will keep you; that's true. As physical death leaves you, eternity will keep you.

Now, men may dream up schemes and plans and all kinds of ways of salvation for men after death but the Scripture knows nothing about that. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: *"If you die in your sins; you cannot come where I am."*

When our Lord talked about the rich man in hell, he cried: *"Father Abraham; send Lazarus down to dip his finger in water and touch my tongue. I am tormented in this flame."* And Abraham said: *"My son; between you and me or between you and us there's a great gulf fixed and no one can pass from you to us and no one from us to you."*

My friend; the Scripture says in **Revelation 22:11**: *"He that is unjust let him be unjust still."* If you die tonight as an unjust man in your sins without God, without Christ, without hope, you remain unjust. *"He that's filthy; let him be filthy still. But, he that's righteous; let him be righteous still."* Our righteousness is Christ. He's our hope, our foundation, our refuge. He's our righteousness. He that hath Christ shall have Him still.

He that's holy; none of us lay claim to a personal holiness but we lay claim to the holiness of Christ Jesus. He that is holy in Christ, let him be holy still.

My friend; eternal life is to be obtained (if it is obtained at all) in this life. This is when we receive it. This is when we believe it; I would say to you: while you have the faculties of understanding and the faculties of reason and the faculties of hearing.

The Scripture says: give your heart and your life to your God when you are young. That's what it says. *"Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth while the evil days come not or the days draw nigh when you say, I have no pleasure in those things."*

There will come a day when you will be dull of reason and dull of memory and dull of thinking. Listen to the Word of God now. ***"Lay hold upon eternal life."*** You have nothing facing you of greater importance.

You must face death. You must die physically. Oh to live spiritually! You must face God in judgment. Oh to have Christ as my Mediator! You must spend eternity somewhere. Oh to spend that eternity with almighty God, enjoying His presence and His love!

I want to point out five things about laying hold on eternal life. If you have a pencil and paper and you would like to jot down these five points, I would be happy for you to do so. It may be that you go back and study it later and it will be helpful to you.

Here are five things that I would like to present to you on this subject: “*Laying Hold On Eternal Life:*”

Somebody might ask this question while you are listening. You have heard what I had to say on eternal life, you say: “I would like to have it; how do I lay hold on eternal life.” Ok, listen to these five things:

First of all: Lay hold on eternal life, by believing the gospel of Christ!

1 John 5:11 says: “*This is the record, God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son and he that hath the Son of God hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*”

God has given us eternal life and it’s in His Son. That’s where He vested it, that’s where He put it, in His Son. His Son bought that right. His Son has that right by decree. His Son has that right by design and purpose.

His Son has that right by death. His Son has that right to possess all things. He’s the source of all life and all grace. All life is in Him: “*As the Father quickeneth the dead, even so the Son quickeneth (or maketh alive) whom He will.*” This is the record; believe it! That’s where you start.

It’s impossible to please God without faith. “*Without faith it is impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must, (first of all), believe that he is.*” Do you see that? That’s where we start.

Listen to **John 3:36:** “*He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life,*” this is the life that we are talking about, this divine life, this eternal life, this spiritual life.

“*He that believeth, (not he that worketh, not he that giveth, not he that goeth, but he that believeth on Christ) he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.*”

Now, you may say, “Well preacher; my faith is weak.” Your faith may be weak, it may be frail but the promise is not based on the strength of your faith but the object of faith. The promise to you is in Christ.

It’s not the strength of your faith; it’s the object of your faith. The Roman Centurion said this to Christ: “*Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*” It’s not the strength of the faith. It may be weak and frail but it’s the object of the thing; believe on Christ with whatever faith you have.

And this faith may be limited in knowledge. I like what the blind man said, the man who was blind, and Christ made him whole. Christ asked him: “*Do you believe on the Son of God?*” He said: “*Who is he that I might believe?*”

What did the thief on the cross know about original sin? What did the thief on the cross know about prophecy? What did the thief on the cross know about the law? He knew he was a sinner and he knew the sinner's hope was in Christ and he asked for mercy.

So, this faith may be weak, it may be frail, and it may be limited in knowledge and this faith may claim no merit of its own.

**“In my hands no price I bring
Simply to the cross of Jesus Christ I cling.”**

Listen to Peter as he sank beneath the waves: *“Lord; save me or I perish.”* Can you do that? You see, that's where you start. You start by believing. You start by believing you are sinking and believing that He is able to save. You start by believing that He is the only Saviour, believing that He is the one to whom we are to turn, for this faith is convinced there is no other place to turn.

“Will you also go away? To whom shall I go? Thou hast the Words of eternal life.” So, that's the first thing. How do you lay hold on this life? I want this life. Above all things I want this life.

I've got to die. I've got to face God in the judgment. I've got to spend eternity somewhere. I don't want to spend eternity separated from God. I don't want to spend eternity under the judgment and wrath of a Holy God.

I don't want to spend eternity in filthiness, uncleanness, and darkness. I want to spend eternity with God; how can I lay hold on eternal life? Believe Him; *“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved: He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.”*

Secondly: Believe it and receive it!

Now my friend, remember, life is not a doctrine, it's a Person. This eternal life, this divine life, is not a religion, it's a Person. It's not a law; it's not a ceremony or a ritual. We were born with ritualism, ceremonialism, legalism and every other kind of “ism,” but this life is a Person.

It says in **John 1:12**: *“As many as (Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, white or black, rich or poor, old or young, learned or ignorant) as many as received him, (Him, Him), to them gave the right, the privilege to become Sons of God.”*

That's what it is; receive Him. The apostle Paul said this in **2 Timothy 1:12**: *“I know whom I have believed, (you see, there's believing) and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him;”* that's trusting Him, that's receiving Him; receiving Christ is to trust Him!

Thirdly: Then, receiving Christ is to acknowledge Him, to acknowledge Him as He is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

I believe what God says about His Son, do you? I believe what God says about me, about my sins, about my need, and about my inability. I believe what God says about Himself, His holiness, His righteousness, His merit, His justice, and His truth.

I know there is no way that I can approach unto the holiness of God unless somebody makes me holy. In Christ I have that holiness, that righteousness.

I received Him. I received Him as my Prophet, Priest, and King; my Prophet to reveal God, my Priest to atone for my sins and a King to reign over me. I received Him as my Intercessor. I receive Him as my Advocate. I receive Him as my Mediator. I receive Him as the one who pleads for me before the righteous, holy throne of a sovereign God. Do you receive Him?

How do you lay hold of eternal life? You believe Him; that's where you start. Then, you consciously, intelligently receive Him: *"I know whom I have believed."*

A man cannot trust an unrevealed Saviour. Paul wrote in **Romans 10**: *"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How are they going to call on him in whom they have not believed and how are they going to believe in him of whom they have not heard and how are they going to hear without a preacher?"*

Fourthly: Cherish it, cherish eternal life!

You know, most men will preserve physical life at any cost. What will you do to save your physical life, what will you give? Say you had a fortune and a doctor tomorrow told you that you had cancer and you could be cured but it would cost you every dime you've got, you would pay it. That's right, you would pay it.

Listen to **Job 2:4**: *"All that a man hath will he give for his life."* If someone told you that you had a disease and there was a doctor who was in tim-buck-two who could cure you, you would borrow the money, catch a plane, and go and find him even if you were in the heart of the jungle. A man will do anything to preserve physical life.

What will you give in exchange for your soul? Now you think about that for a while. That physical body of yours is going to die and rot and go back to the dust in 70, 80, 90 years at the most but your soul is going to live forever.

My friend, this thing of eternal life; believe it, receive it and cherish it. We need to give ourselves to the things that promote eternal life, to the things that promote knowledge of Christ.

What are these things that promote eternal life? It's the things that are identified with eternal life, the Word of God.

I tell you, if you spend as much time reading the Scriptures as you do health books and vitamin books and home remedy books and all of these other things trying to get good health physically, you would be in a lot better condition.

Read the Word of God. Spend time in prayer. Listen to the preaching of the Gospel. Find the place where God is worshipped and worship there.

Then, walk around with a godly companion. I will tell you: *“Evil companions corrupt good manners.”* I’d separate myself. I would flee those things. That is what Paul said to Timothy: *“Flee those things that are detrimental to your spiritual life, flee those things that are detrimental to your spiritual growth.”* Flee those things that drag you down and cherish that valuable gift in Christ which God has given you. Cherish eternal life.

Fifth: Enjoy, enjoy eternal life!

Brethren, listen to me: you can get involved in all the controversies of this day if you wish, that’s your privilege, that’s your right. You can be a party politician, you can be a man of culture, and you can be a man of education and speculation.

You can be a man of power and possessions and praise if you see fit, that’s your privilege. But, if you will take my advice, you will lay hold on eternal life.

You are going to have to lay down the things of this world someday. I will tell you: they are not worth the time that you spend to acquire them. You’ve got to lay these things down.

God’s going to burn this world and God’s going to burn everything associated with this world. Do you know what God said in the Book of Job? *“Naked I came out of my mother’s womb. Naked I came into this world and naked I’m going to leave this world. The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

I would say unto you, to lay hold on eternal life in this sense: consider it the most valuable thing that you have and nothing else is worth your time or your trouble. Hang loosely; hold loosely onto the things of this world. Be ready to let them go.

I like what Ruth said to Naomi, she said: *“Where you go, I’ll go. Where you lodge, I’ll lodge. Your God will be my God. Your people will be my people. I will live where you live. I’ll die where you die and there’s where I will be buried.”*

I want to say that to Christ, to His church, and to His people; *“where you live, I live. Your people are my people.”*

Lay hold on eternal life; believe it, receive it, treasure it, enjoy it and make it your aim, make it your goal, make it your pastime, make it your hobby, make it your life’s work and then expect it, sooner than you know, Christ is going to call you!

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Our life here is a vapor, my life and your life is but a shadow, a flower that is blooming today and tomorrow it is gone. Look for that city. Abraham looked for it. Count it very near and look forward to it; it's nearer than you can possibly imagine.

Paul said: *"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better."* In other words he is saying this: "I want to die." You say that's a strange request. Yea, but he knew what hell was, *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better." Look forward to it; look forward to this eternal life!